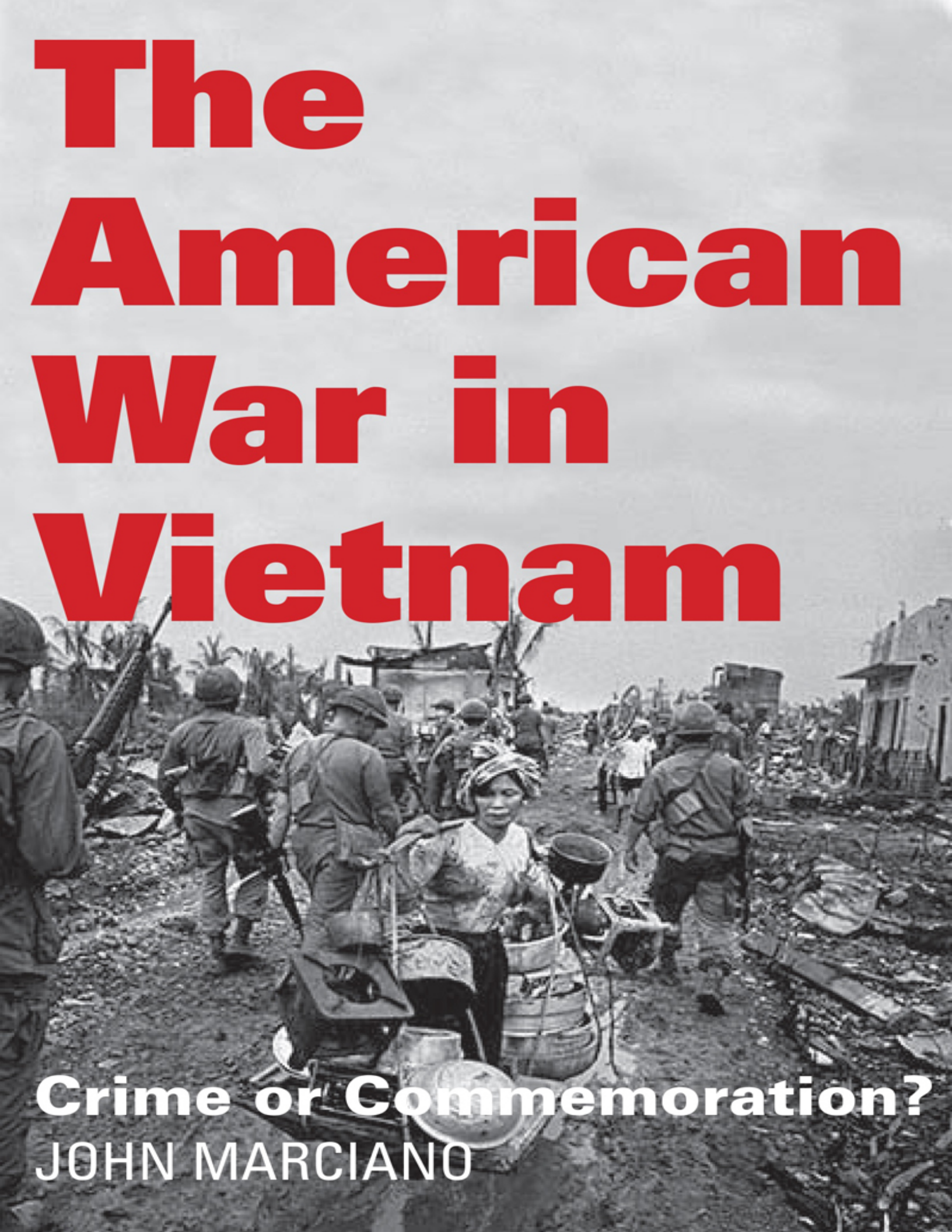
The American War in Vietnam



Crime or Commemoration?

JOHN MARCIANO

The American War in Vietnam

Crime or Commemoration?
JOHN MARCIANO

The American War in Vietnam

The American War in Vietnam

Crime or Commemoration?

by JOHN MARCIANO

MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS
New York

Copyright © 2016 by John Marciano
All Rights Reserved

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:
Name: Marciano, J. D., author.
Title: The American war in Vietnam : crime or commemoration? / by John Marciano.
Description: New York : Monthly Review Press, [2016] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2016017663| ISBN 9781583675854 (pbk.) | ISBN 9781583675861 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781583675878 (e-book trade) | ISBN 9781583675885 (e-book institution)
Subjects: LCSH: Vietnam War, 1961-1975--United States. | Vietnam War, 1961-1975--Moral and ethical aspects. | Memorialization—Political aspects—United States.
Classification: LCC DS558 .M354 2016 | DDC 959.704/3373—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2016017663

Typeset in Minion Pro

Monthly Review Press, New York
monthlyreview.org

5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction: The Commemoration Story

1. The Noble Cause Principle and the Actual History

2. French Colonialism and the Origins of the American War in Vietnam

3. The Diem Regime and President John F. Kennedy

4. President Johnson and Escalation of the War

5. President Nixon, “Vietnamization,” and the End of the War

6. Some Lessons and Myths of the American War in Vietnam

Notes

Bibliography

Index

for Bill Griffen

Husband, father, teacher, scholar, writer, musician, baseball player, fighter for justice and peace who stayed the course. My friend.

Acknowledgments

Some years ago, my late SUNY Cortland colleague Bill Griffen and I planned to update our critical examination of the American War in Vietnam and its treatment in secondary history texts (*Teaching the Vietnam War*, 1979). It was not to be, however, because of his death in February 2007 from prostate cancer. I labored on this book, therefore, in the spirit of our loving intellectual and political comradeship. Bill had retired in 2006 after fifty-one years of teaching as the longest-serving professor in the history of the State University of New York.

A special thanks goes to my first and toughest reader, Jeff Cooper, for his long and patient, no-nonsense review and suggestions. I also wish to thank Bill Ehrhart, Marilyn Young, Fred Wilcox, and Jeremy Kuzmarov for their careful reading of the entire work, and Noam Chomsky for somehow finding the time to read the final chapter. Thanks also go to Philip Bennett, Carl Mirra, Edward Morgan, Jim O'Brien, and John Ryder for comments on the original proposal and individual sections; Joe Montuori, for his invaluable help on secondary history textbooks; Judy Griffen, Bill's widow, for her steadfast support; my wife, Leslie Dwyer, who stayed the course with me over the two years of work and kept asking, "Who's your audience?"; Michael Yates of MR Press for his editorial assistance and belief in this project; and Erin Claremont for her excellent copy editing.

I trust that all those above will find this work worthy of their efforts.

INTRODUCTION

The Commemoration Story

In May 2012, President Barack Obama and the Pentagon announced a Commemoration of the Vietnam War to continue through 2025, the fiftieth anniversary of the conflict's end. Among the Commemoration's objectives, three stand out: "To thank and honor" veterans of the war and their families, including those "who were held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States"; to "highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during" the war; and to "recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies.…" The Commemoration will sponsor thousands of activities over the next ten years, including concerts, educational curricula, school visits by veterans, symposia, school projects, memorial festivities, and POW/MIA ceremonies.

Also that May, Obama gave a Commemoration speech at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington. He urged the nation to honor veterans who fought—an implicit call to honor the cause for which they fought, and to deter challenges to the official story. The American war in Vietnam remains "one of the most painful chapters in our history … most particularly, how we treated our troops who served there.… You were sometimes blamed for misdeeds of a few when the honorable service of the many should have been praised." Was he thinking of the My Lai massacre? "You came home and sometimes were denigrated, when you should have been celebrated. It was a national shame, a disgrace that should have never happened."

The Commemoration is "another chance to set the record straight." Obama emphasized the POW issue, as he praised those who "wrote one of the most extraordinary stories of bravery and integrity in the annals of military history." In a criticism of the antiwar movement, he cited the need to tell the story of "how … some Americans turned their back on you.…" In a brief sentence, he urged Americans to "never forget the costs of war,

including the terrible loss of innocent civilians—not just in Vietnam.…" He erased from history, however, the millions of Vietnamese who were killed, maimed, and became refugees.

Obama claimed that Americans "hate" war. "When we fight, we do so to protect ourselves because it's necessary." Although acknowledging the "deep divisions" the conflict produced at home, he asserted that "in our democracy we can debate and disagree—even in a time of war.… Patriots can support a war; patriots can oppose a war." Regardless of our powerful differences, however, we must "always stand united in support of our troops.…" Like many presidents before him, Obama closed his speech by calling upon God to bless "our men and women in uniform [and] these United States of America."

The Commemoration objectives and Obama's speech reveal the official story that will be taught about the American war in Vietnam—and will be challenged in this book. This official story has many lessons.

The most fundamental lesson is that the war in Vietnam was fought on behalf of "the ideals we hold dear as Americans." Obama and the Vietnam Commemoration embrace the view put forth by President Ronald Reagan in 1980: "It is time we recognized that ours, in truth, was a Noble Cause."

According to Obama and the Vietnam Commemoration Commission, the war was honorable. Therefore, it follows that those who fought it deserve citizens' respect and support. This raises some profound questions: Can a war be honorable if, as will be argued here, it was a violation of international law, a criminal act of aggression? If so, can the warrior be separated from the war, and act with honor in a criminal cause?

Since more than sixteen hundred servicemen are still Missing in Action (MIA), the Vietnamese should provide us with "the fullest possible accounting for those who have not returned," Obama said. Thus, he extended the POW/MIA myth that has been sustained in the United States for decades.

This was "one of the most painful chapters in our history," Obama continued, a reminder that the focus of the Commemoration will be on what the war did to Americans, not to the Vietnamese, who suffered staggering human and ecological losses.

Those who served in the war were not well treated when they returned home, an attack on Americans who opposed the conflict: this reopens the

widely believed myth that antiwar activists spit on and generally mistreated returning veterans. Although “deep divisions” arose over the conflict, Americans are a family who can support or oppose a war while standing united in supporting those who fought. The president’s claim, however, rewrites the actual history of that period. “Patriot” was not the word of choice for U.S. officials to describe those who dissented from their policies —*including antiwar activists in the military*—as they maligned, harassed, and imprisoned citizens who exercised their constitutional rights to protest the war.

It is important that the record of this war be set straight, particularly for young people. Americans are asked to believe that government officials who supported the American war as a Noble Cause—and lied about it for decades—are now going to set them “straight” about what happened and why. Finally, saying that as a nation we “hate war” and “only fight to protect to ourselves because it’s necessary” is a gross distortion easily refuted by the facts of U.S. history.

Another Story

After each war the United States fights, the dominant and official story is presented to succeeding generations, particularly young people. This story stresses the importance and justice of U.S. involvement, and defends the nobility of wartime conduct. Long after the guns are silent, therefore, there is a struggle over memory. Why did the United States go to war? What were the costs—ecological, human, and material? Throughout U.S. history, the answers to these questions have been shaped by dominant and powerful war makers based in Washington, and passed on by the corporate media, public ceremonies, political officials, and school history textbooks. These answers have been challenged, however, by the not-so-powerful who counter the dominant view: critical public intellectuals and citizens, independent filmmakers, poets and writers, and teachers.

The essential message of the dominant view remains the same: U.S. wars are just and honorable, fought for a Noble Cause, the essence of which is the belief that the United States is “a unique force for good in the world, superior not only in its military and economic power, but in the quality of

its government and institutions, the character and morality of its people, and its way of life."[1] *The American War* challenges this dominant view.

The Real History and Its Lessons

Journalist and antiwar activist Jack Smith argues that the Commemoration seeks to accomplish two fundamental and long-lasting goals: "The first is to legitimize and intensify a renewed warrior spirit within America as the Pentagon emerges from two counter-productive, ruinously expensive and stalemated unjust wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and prepares for further military adventures in Asia, the Middle East and Africa." The second goal is to essentially shape and change citizens' "memory of historic public opposition" to the American war with the Pentagon's "censored account of the conflict.…"[2]

The actual lessons of the American war in Vietnam contradict the view put forth by the Commemoration and Obama. Writing at the end of the conflict in 1975, Noam Chomsky, arguably the foremost critic of American foreign policy, addresses these:

> American imperialism has suffered a stunning defeat in Indochina. But the same forces are engaged in another war against a much less resilient enemy, the American people. Here, the prospects for success are much greater. The battleground is ideological, not military. At stake are the lessons to be drawn from the American war in Indochina; the outcome will determine the course and character of new imperial ventures.[3]

What Chomsky asserts is key to any critique of the Commemoration. If the American war in Vietnam "is understood, as it properly must be, as a major crime against peace," then the Noble Cause thesis must be rejected. Those who support the Commemoration's view of the imperial war against the Vietnamese, therefore, will attempt to "guarantee that 'no wrong lessons' are learned from the … war and the resistance to it." U.S. leaders will find it necessary to "reestablish the basic principle that the use of force by the United States is legitimate, if only it can succeed."[4]

What lessons, therefore, does the Commemoration wish to teach about this epic event in history? Whose truth will be highlighted for generations to come? Who will speak for the millions who were killed and maimed?

What will the lessons of the American war in Vietnam teach about present and future U.S. wars?

Tom Hayden, longtime political and antiwar activist, challenges the Reagan "Noble Cause" view of the American war, the Commemoration, and Obama's claims:

> The effort seems focused primarily on the sacrifices made by American troops in a battle for American ideals. There is nothing revealed about Vietnamese nationalism, sacrifice, casualties or ultimate success—not to mention the ongoing deprivation, Agent Orange poisonings, cluster bombs left behind as signs of inhumanity. Nor is there mention of the peace movement, the historic rallies, the unity across racial lines, the GI revolts inside the armed forces, the unconstitutional domestic spying and indictments, the McGovern campaign, or the Pentagon Papers. Clearly the National Security State is attempting to win on the field of American memory what was lost on the battlefield. Since the struggle for memory shapes our future choices, it is important that peace activists engage in this debate wherever possible.[5]

How citizens, especially young ones, analyze the American war in Vietnam will determine whether they accept or resist the organized propaganda campaign to gain support for it. In March 2013, for example, the Gallup organization polled Americans about their views on the conflict: "Looking back, do you think the U.S. made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam?" Fifty-seven percent said yes, 34 percent said no, and 9 percent had no opinion—the lowest opposition to the war since it ended in 1975. The age differences are striking: only 43 percent of those eighteen to twenty-nine said it was a mistake, compared to 70 percent of those sixty-five or older.[6]

Education: Basic Training for War

Even amid the height of protest during the American war, far too many educators, public officials, and media pundits passed on an uncritical patriotism and militarism, leaving citizens and youth without the critical skills needed for informed dissent and empowered citizenship in a democracy. At the end of the 1991 Persian Gulf war, the journalist Andrew Kopkind laid out this dissenting challenge: "America has been in a state of war—cold, hot and lukewarm—for as long as most citizens now living can remember." This militaristic state "is so ingrained in American institutions … in short, so totalitarian—that the government is practically unthinkable

without it." This war mentality influences every social institution and emphasizes "secrecy not candor, propaganda not information."[7] Kopkind shatters the story of American benevolence put forth by Obama and the Vietnam Commemoration.

Lessons that Should Be Learned

Before discussing some of the major lessons of the American war that should be learned, it is important to pause and think about the staggering human and environmental toll left behind in Vietnam:

> Total war dead: The estimates include a figure of 882 thousand reported in a demographic study published in *Population and Development Review*, 1995, and a 3.6 million estimate by General Nguyen Dinh Uoc, of the Vietnamese Institute of Military History, 1995. In *Kill Anything that Moves*, historian Nick Turse states: "The most sophisticated analysis … of wartime mortality in Vietnam, a 2008 study by researchers from Harvard Medical School and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, suggested that a reasonable estimate might be 3.8 million violent war deaths, combat and civilian. The findings lend credence to an official 1995 Vietnamese government estimate of more than three million deaths in total … for the years when the Americans were involved in combat." The *Indochina Newsletter* estimates a total of 14.3 million refugees overall. In South Vietnam there were three hundred thousand orphans and eight hundred thousand children who lost one or both parents; 15.5 million tons of bombs, ground and naval munitions landed on Vietnam, more than double that used by the United States in all of the Second World War; and twenty million gallons of poisonous herbicides were spread over South Vietnam.[8]

Historian Marilyn Young states that at the end of the war, some 9,000 hamlets out of a total of 15,000 were destroyed, as well as 25 million acres of farmland and 12 million acres of forest. In addition, there were about 200,000 prostitutes, 181,000 people disabled, and 1 million widows.[9] The 3.8 million dead Vietnamese were approximately 8 percent of the total population of that country in 1975. The equivalent death toll in the United States would be about 17.5 million people.

Recent History

A brief review of U.S. military actions after 1975 is necessary to counter the notion that the death and destruction the United States rained upon Vietnam was merely something from the past that has no bearing on recent

decades and the present. As documented by Vietnam veteran and historian Andrew Bacevich, historian and writer Tom Engelhardt, late historian and former CIA analyst Chalmers Johnson, and historians Alfred McCoy and Nick Turse, the last forty years have witnessed an endless string of wars and attempted regime changes in Panama, Nicaragua, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria; the massive growth of a worldwide system of military bases; secret Special Operations missions in 2014 in more than a hundred nations; drone attacks in countless countries; massive spying on Americans and citizens of other nations by the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA), as revealed by the whistleblower Edward Snowden; and a "War on Terror" since September 11, 2001, that has, in the name of combating terror, created conditions and "blowback" that have fueled the rise of militant Islamist armed forces now active in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia.[10]

The Corporate Media

The Vietnam Commemoration and Obama's speech are merely the latest attempts since 1975 to deny the horrors listed above and portray U.S. violence as a Noble Cause that went astray—the dominant theme put forth by the corporate media, including the influential *New York Times*. Despite criticisms of American decisions and tactics in the war, the corporate mass media supported the premises underlying Washington's foreign policy and the ends of the conflict. Journalist and media historian Philip Knightly challenges the widely held belief that American reporters opposed the war: "There is only one flaw in this: the correspondents were not questioning American intervention itself, but only its effectiveness." They were "as interested in seeing the United States win the war as was the Pentagon. What [they] questioned was not American policy, but the tactics used to implement that policy.…"[11]

Daniel Hallin, a professor of communications, also disputes the myth that press and television reports confronted civilian and military authorities, and undermined the war effort, essentially the "liberal myth of the adversary press in Vietnam." Despite this myth, those who have "systematically investigated the media's role in the war [reveal that] there is an impressive consensus rejecting the notions that the media were

adversaries to America's policy in Vietnam or a decisive factor in the outcome of the war." As of the time of Hallin's study in 1989, the three major studies of network television coverage of the war had arrived at the same conclusion: "All reject the idea that the living-room war meant graphic portrayals of violence on a daily basis, or that the television was consistently negative toward U.S. policy or led public opinion in turning against the war."[12]

The Antiwar Movement at Home and in the Military

The domestic antiwar movement challenged Washington's policies; however, the key forces bringing the conflict to an end were the Vietnamese resistance and antiwar protest within the U.S. military. The protest against the war did not begin with college students in 1965, as many Americans believe, but twenty years earlier—in October 1945 when troopships bringing GIs home after the Second World War were diverted to transport French troops to Vietnam to continue its colonial rule there, sparking the first antiwar protest against American involvement. Tens of thousands of veterans of the American war became involved in the antiwar movement, as extraordinary dissent and rebellion emerged from within the U.S. military.

Commemoration Myths

Air Force veteran and scholar H. Bruce Franklin disputes one of the great myths of the American war, resurrected in a different form by Obama and the Commemoration: a deeply held belief held by most citizens decades after the fighting ended that "American prisoners of war [were] still being held as captives in Indochina." Obama's reference to this controversy in his speech lends credence to the myth. According to Franklin, the anguish over POWs and MIAs remained "the most important concern of many Vietnam veterans," exceeding that around other pressing issues, such as Agent Orange and medical care. This myth was linked with that of returning vets abused by antiwar activists, a myth discredited by Vietnam veteran Jerry Lembcke's *Spitting Image*, but a testimony to the strength of the dominant and inaccurate beliefs on the war that keep people uninformed and manipulated.[13] In their concern for alleged American prisoners and missing

in action, citizens here ignored the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese missing at the end of the war, as well as the thousands of homeless Vietnam veterans walking U.S. streets.

The MIA/POW issue helped postwar presidents engage in economic and political warfare against Vietnam for at least two decades, until diplomatic relations were established during the Clinton presidency. After the war ended in 1975, the United States was the only major nation to withhold diplomatic recognition to Vietnam. In 1977 former president Carter was asked whether the United States had "a moral obligation to help rebuild" the country. He stated that we owed Vietnam no debt and had no responsibility because "the destruction was mutual." Since "we went to Vietnam without any desire … to impose American will on other people" but to "defend the freedom of the South Vietnamese," there was no reason "to apologize or to castigate ourselves or to assume the status of culpability." Called one of the "most astonishing statements in diplomatic history," it created no stir "among educated Americans" and did not "diminish Carter's standing as patron saint of human rights."[14]

Ecological Catastrophe

The devastating environmental health effects of the war continue to this day, for Vietnamese and U.S. veterans. The ongoing damage to both is told by Arthur Westing in *Ecological Consequences of the Second Indochina War*; Fred Wilcox in *Scorched Earth: Legacies of Chemical Warfare in Vietnam* and *Waiting for an Army to Die*; and Edwin Martini in *Agent Orange*. Marjorie Cohn, a professor of law and former president of the National Lawyers Guild, participated as one of the judges in the 2009 International Peoples' Tribunal of Conscience in Support of the Vietnamese Victims of Agent Orange. The panel found that the U.S. government and the chemical manufacturers "knew that dioxin, one of the most dangerous chemicals known to humans, was present in one of the components of Agent Orange. Yet they continued to use it." It also found that the U.S. war in Vietnam "was an illegal war of aggression (crime against peace) … in violation of the United Nations Charter. It further decided that the use of dioxin was a war crime because it qualified as a poisoned weapon in violation of … international law." And finally, "The use of dioxin was a

crime against humanity, as it constituted an inhuman act perpetrated against a civilian population in connection with a crime against peace and war crimes."[15]

The False Story and Denial

Unless challenged, the Vietnam Commemoration and Obama-Reagan view will dominate the lessons of the American war. H. Bruce Franklin's critique of the dominant view should therefore be considered: "Denial has been, in every sense, the terms necessary to fathom the depths of deception and delusion essential to America's war in Vietnam." The main competing American stories of the war are the Noble Cause, the quagmire, and Imperialism. The Noble Cause story is Ronald Reagan's ignorant history of the war that began after 1954 when "North Vietnam" tried to take over "South Vietnam." The quagmire story also begins in 1954 when "a 'reluctant United States'" decided to support the Diem regime and got stuck in "the mire of Vietnam." The Imperialism history begins in 1945 when American leaders "committed the nation to buttressing, maintaining, and becoming the dominant power within [a worldwide] imperial system." For Franklin, and this writer, the imperial explanation is the only one that makes sense and can reasonably account for America's "half-century of military, political and economic warfare against Vietnam and hostility toward every other colony and former colony that resisted" its aggression.[16]

An Alternative Commemoration

The Veterans for Peace (VFP) is challenging the Commemoration's propaganda, based on the work of antiwar veterans, historians, poets, writers, and activists. Its Full Disclosure campaign seeks to "speak truth to power and keep alive the antiwar perspective on the American war in Viet Nam.… It represents a clear alternative to the Pentagon's current efforts to sanitize and mythologize" that war and thereby "legitimize further unnecessary and destructive wars."

Scheduled events and activities in the campaign have included a series of teach-ins around the country that marked the fiftieth anniversary of the first teach-in held at the University of Michigan in March 1965; ongoing

work with educational advocacy organizations such as the Zinn Educational Project to prepare alternative reading guides, articles, and curricula for students and teachers; antiwar films such as *Yes Sir, No Sir*, which focuses on the GI antiwar movement; protests against current American military actions around the world; and the development of written material by antiwar activists, scholars, and veterans on the conflict and related contemporary issues. The Full Disclosure campaign will continue during the Commemoration, until 2025. For more information, readers should go to its website.

1

The Noble Cause Principle and the Actual History

A powerful and fundamental belief has marked U.S. history: it is the "exceptional" nation chosen to lead the world. This belief is the essential foundation for the Noble Cause principle that justifies U.S. foreign policy, and the American War in Vietnam in particular. The fundamental lessons of the American war should be viewed within the context of this principle. The actual history of this nation, however, reveals it as a total lie. This principle has dominated political views about this country, however, as reflected by the following proclamations of this faith, beginning with the great American writer Herman Melville:[1]

> In the mid-nineteenth century, the Noble Cause principle was articulated by the narrator in Melville's novel *White-Jacket*: "And we Americans are the peculiar chosen people—the Israel of our time; we bear the arc of liberties of the world.… God has predestined, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls.… We are the pioneers of the world; the advance-guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a new path in the New World that is ours."
>
> ---
>
> In 1900, Senator Albert Beveridge proclaimed the principle during the U.S. imperialist war against the Philippines: "We are the ruling race of the world.… We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee, under God of the civilization of the world.… He has marked us as his chosen people.
>
> … He has made us adept in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples."
>
> The principle is forever linked with the twenty-eighth president, Woodrow Wilson: "Sometimes people call me an idealist.… Well that's the way I know I am an American. America … is the only idealistic nation in the world."
>
> After the Second World War, the influential diplomat George Kennan wrote: "Leadership of the free world was … thrust upon the American people by divine providence and the laws of

both history and nature." Our very "security as a nation [is] dependent on … accepting the responsibilities of moral and policy leadership that history plainly intended [us] to bear."

As he escalated the American War in Vietnam in the 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson defended it in Noble Cause terms: "We have no territory there, nor do we seek any.… We want nothing for ourselves … we fight for values and we fight for principles." The United States, "uniquely blessed with surpassing riches and an exceptional history, stands above the international system, not within it. Alone among nations, she stands ready to be the bearer of the law."

Henry Kissinger, national security advisor to Richard Nixon during the American war in Vietnam, stated that the United States acts for "the well-being of all mankind.… This is why Americans have always seen their role in the world as the outward manifestation of an inward state of grace."

President Ronald Reagan was a true believer in the Noble Cause. Americans "have never been aggressors. We have always struggled to defend freedom and democracy. We have no territorial ambitions. We occupy no countries."

Reagan's successor, George H.W. Bush, stated: "A world once divided into two armed camps now recognizes one sole and preeminent superpower: the United States of America. And they regard this with no dread. For the world trusts us with power—and the world is right. They trust us to be on the side of decency. They trust us to do what's right."

Bush's successor, Bill Clinton, continued the Noble Cause celebration: "America's ideals … are more and more the aspirations of people everywhere in the world. It is the power of our ideas … that makes America a uniquely trusted nation."

Madeleine Albright, Clinton's secretary of state, proclaimed: "The United States is good. We try to do our best everywhere."

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, President George W. Bush stated: "America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world."

In 2011, President Barack Obama stated, "America remains the one indispensable nation, and the world needs a strong America.… We're a nation that brings our enemies to justice while adhering to the rule of law, and respecting the rights of all citizens. We protect our own freedom and prosperity by extending it to others."

In 2013, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton echoed her president: "We are the indispensable nation. We are the force for progress, prosperity, and peace."

What if someone with a documented history of violence against others thought of himself as exceptional, chosen by destiny or God? People would rightfully reject this self-proclaimed greatness and justice toward others, and reasonably conclude that the person making such claims was dangerous

or unstable. Many citizens, however, seem incapable of applying such common sense to this nation's leaders.

The Actual History

Matthew Rothschild, editor of The *Progressive*, offers a reality check to the propaganda that the United States government is a benevolent and shining beacon for the world—with a focus on the recent past:

> Well, let's see: The United States led the world to the cliffs of nuclear annihilation during the Cold War. The United States invaded one Latin American country after another, and subverted other governments there covertly. The United States helped overthrow governments in Ghana and the Congo, and supported racist forces in southern Africa. The United States plunged into the Korean War, and then supported one dictator after another in South Korea.… And the United States supported Suharto in Indonesia, who killed nearly a million people, some at the behest of the CIA, after taking power in 1965. The United States also supported Suharto's invasion of East Timor ten years later, which took another 200,000 lives.… Obama can call that "global security" if he wants to, but it's dripping red.… The United States has invaded or overthrown dozens of countries in the last six decades, and it doesn't need to occupy them if it can install a puppet regime instead.[2]

Commenting on the commonsense view about Noble Cause claims, scholar and activist Robert Jensen questions the dominant story about the United States, "the model of, and the vehicle for, peace, freedom, and democracy in the world." This story can only be believed, however, "by people sufficiently insulated from the reality of U.S. actions abroad to maintain such illusions."[3]

The Vietnam veteran and historian Andrew Bacevich challenges the guiding premises of the Noble Cause principle in U.S. foreign policy, particularly the political leaders "who have demonstrated their intention [to] reshape the world in accordance with American interests and values." He asserts that we "have it on good authority that the ideals we espouse represent universal truths, valid for all times." In pursuing such policies the United States has "touted [its] status as God's new Chosen People.… We acted at the behest of providential guidance or responded to the urgings of our 'manifest destiny.'"[4]

The Noble Cause principle, promoted by presidents and other powerful government officials, the corporate mass media, influential intellectuals, and the educational system, is at the heart of the Commemoration of the

American war. But it is long on passionate beliefs and empty on evidence. Its supporters, therefore, can only maintain their allegiance to American benevolence by omitting or rejecting the evidence, since the false story unravels from the start. According to historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz:

> U.S. history cannot be understood without dealing with the genocide that the United States committed against Indigenous peoples. From the colonial period through the founding of the United States and continuing in the twenty-first century, this has entailed torture, terror, sexual abuse, massacres, systematic military occupations, removals of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral territories, and removals of Indigenous children to military-like boarding schools. The absence of even the slightest note of regret or tragedy in the annual celebration of the U.S. independence betrays a deep disconnect in the consciousness of U.S. Americans.

Essentially, she argues, the United States has been "fundamentally imperialist" from its origin, "rather than imperialism being a divergence from a well-intentioned path."[5]

The European settlement in America in the Colonial period, writes historian Richard Drinnon, is based on the philosophy of "Indian-hating," a form of "white hostility that for four centuries had exterminated 'savages' who stood in the path of Anglo-American expansion." The massacres that were committed "in Vietnam's 'Indian country' in the 1960s [at] My Lai and all the forgotten My Khes" followed logically from those committed against Native Americans here and against Filipinos in the early twentieth century. What has been referred to as "Indian removal," therefore, is the foundation of ethnic cleansing upon which U.S. history is based. The atrocities that are part of this "defining and enabling experience" are not exceptions to an otherwise humane and Noble Cause history, they are essential to it.[6]

At the time of the U.S. War of Independence in the late 1770s, for example, aggression into what is now the northeast United States was blocked by the nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Scholars have pointed out that the Confederacy's democratic governance structure "not only predated the United States Constitution but also influenced the evolution and development of the ideas that shaped the document, as well as other fundamental expressions of the American character." Evidence of this influence "is clearly present in the colonial, revolutionary, and early records of the United States and in the oral and written traditions of the Iroquois."[7]

Despite this rich history and culture, General George Washington, in May 1779, instructed Major General John Sullivan to attack those nations of the Confederacy that sided with the British during the U.S. War of Independence—the Seneca and Mohawk, and those that tried to remain neutral, the Cayuga, Tuscarora, and Onondaga. Only "the Christianized Oneidas" supported the Colonial "separatist settlers."[8]

Washington instructed Major General John Sullivan "to take [preemptive] action against" these nations. He told Sullivan

> to lay waste to all the settlements around … that the country may not be merely overrun but destroyed.… You will not by any means listen to any overtures of peace before the total ruin of their settlements.… Our future security will be in their inability to injure us … and in the terror with which the severity of the chastisement they receive will inspire them.[9]

> The immediate object is their total destruction and devastation and the capture of as many prisoners of every age and sex as possible. It will be essential to ruin their crops now in the ground and prevent their planting more.[10]

How many students, teachers, and citizens know about Washington's scorched earth campaign against the Iroquois? Vietnam veteran S. Brian Willson writes that Washington's direct orders to General Sullivan "established imperial U.S. military principles for centuries to come." They included "(1) total war/genocide targeting *all* inhabitants for elimination; (2) preventing peace; (3) pre-emptive war; (4) terror; (5) crime of self-defense; (6) revenge." Willson points out that Sullivan's campaign has been called "'the most ruthless application of a scorched-earth policy' in U.S. history," on a par with Sherman's March to the Sea in the Civil War, General Curtis LeMay's firebombing of North Korea, and the American search-and-destroy missions in Vietnam.[11]

According to historian David Stannard, the aggression against Native Americans who lived in North America (excluding Mexico) was a genocidal assault without parallel in human history. From the first European arrival in North America to the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890, "between 97 and 99 percent of North America's native peoples were killed." Most political leaders supported this horrific assault, but "few did so with such evident glee" as President Andrew Jackson, who once ordered his troops "to slay all the Indian children they could find, once they had killed the women and men"; who once "supervised the mutilation of 800 or so Creek

Indian corpses—the bodies of men, women, and children that he and his men had massacred." Jackson ordered his troops to "specifically seek out and systematically kill Indian women and children who were in hiding in order to complete their extermination."[12]

In what is known as the Trail of Tears, President Jackson ordered the forced removal of tens of thousands of Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muskogee, and Seminole from their homes in the Southeast to the Indian Territory—now Oklahoma. Although the U.S. government granted this land to the Five Nations forever after they had been brutally removed from their original homes, this was just another promise that was broken as thousands of white settlers rushed in and claimed Native American lands. The Trail of Tears ethnic cleansing opened up some 25 million acres of land for white settlement, slavery, land speculation, and cotton production. The overall death toll rate from this "presidentially ordered death march … was almost as destructive as the Bataan Death March of 1942." More than eight thousand Cherokee "died as a result of their expulsion from their homeland. The death rate for the Creeks, Seminoles, and Cherokee was equal to that of Jews in Germany, Hungary, and Romania between 1939 and 1945."[13]

Jackson is the preeminent figure in the early U.S. history of genocide, "the archetype Indian killer, slave trader, speculator, merchant and then president … as whites took over much of present southern states." His murderous and genocidal brutality clearly contradicts the Noble Cause principle. He claimed that the Indian Removal Act of 1830 that led to the Trail of Tears would advance the Native Americans "from barbarism to the habits of enjoyments of civilized life," as if he were a deeply concerned and humane person, stating: "Toward the aborigines of the country no one can indulge a more friendly feeling than myself, or would go further in attempts to reclaim them from their wandering habits and make them a happy, prosperous people." After a particularly brutal attack that killed Cherokees who had resisted removal, Jackson told Congress: "Severe as is the lesson to the Indians, it was rendered necessary by their unprovoked aggression."[14]

This rationale would be repeated in later U.S. violence around the world, as resistance became "aggression" that justified "honorable self-defense" by U.S. forces that would later define the victimizer-victim relationship in Vietnam. Those who resisted U.S. aggression were called

“terrorists,” whereas the U.S. forces that invaded that country were defending themselves and the “free world.”

Among the prominent citizens supporting and advocating genocide against Native Americans in the nineteenth century was L. Frank Baum, author of the much-beloved *The Wizard of Oz* and editor of the *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer* newspaper in South Dakota at the time of the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890. Before the massacre, he stated: “The nobility of the redskin is extinguished and what few are left are a pack of whining curs who lick the hand that smites them. The whites, by law of conquest, by civilization, are masters of the American continent, and the best safety of the frontier settlements will be secured by the total annihilation of the few remaining Indians.” Shortly after the massacre, Baum wrote: “We had better, in order to protect our civilization, follow it up … and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth.”[15]

Alongside the imperial destruction of Native American nations, came economic, political, and military aggression against Latin America that began very early in U.S. history and has continued to the present with more than fifty years of economic embargo and terrorism against Cuba—condemned by virtually every state in the United Nations. Journalist-scholar Juan Gonzalez, former State Department official William Blum, and historian Greg Grandin document this violent imperial history. Gonzalez points out that U.S. presidents such as Jefferson, Jackson, and Theodore Roosevelt, all firm believers in white supremacy, “regarded [U.S.] domination of the region as ordained by nature. The main proponents and beneficiaries of this empire building, however, were speculators, plantation owners, banks and merchants who bankrolled armed rebellions in those Spanish-speaking lands by white settlers.”[16]

One of those famous citizens supporting U.S. government aggression against “those Spanish-speaking lands” was the great American poet Walt Whitman, who enthusiastically supported the invasion of Mexico in 1846 and “proposed … stationing … sixty thousands US troops [there] in order to establish a regime change.” His imperialist views on Mexican regime change were built upon white supremacy: “The nigger, like the Injun, will be eliminated; it is the law of the races, history.… What has miserable, inefficient Mexico … to do with the great mission of peopling the New World with a noble race?”[17]

A century after the Mexican invasion, Blum documents the staggering number of U.S. interventions that have taken place in Latin America since the Second World War: Haiti, Guatemala, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Chile, Grenada, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama—and Cuba. Historian Greg Grandin points out that by the mid-twentieth century alone, the United States had sent its warships into Latin America more than six thousand times, invaded numerous countries, engaged in long guerrilla wars in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Haiti, annexed Puerto Rico, and stole part of Colombia "to create both the Panamanian nation and the Panama Canal." Added to these, "American corporations and financial houses came to dominate the economies of Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America, as well as large parts of South America," commencing "their overseas expansion before they headed elsewhere, to Asia, Africa, and Europe."[18]

In his analyses of U.S. history, Andrew Bacevich has exposed a central premise of the Noble Cause principle: "The restless search for a buck and the ruthless elimination of anyone—or any-thing—standing in the way … have been central to the American character." This "American character" applies to European settlers and their descendants, though not Native Americans, since this "restless search" has not been central to their culture. "If the young United States had a mission," writes Bacevich, "it was not to liberate but to expand." From the beginning, the United States compulsively expanded and "the historical record leaves no room for debate" on how this was done, which was "by any means necessary" including "full-scale invasions [and] ethnic cleansing." This record totally contradicts the mythical Noble Cause view we have been taught about post-Independence expansion.[19]

Moving ahead into the mid-twentieth century and the present, it is clear that the beliefs about the Noble Cause principle after the Second World War do not match the facts. Blum has compiled an extensive and factual list of U.S. imperial violence during this period. It includes an extraordinary number of unprovoked invasions and covert actions against sovereign nations—what is now called "regime change." Excluding his list of Latin American countries cited above, these nations include Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Congo, Greece, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Laos, Libya, the Soviet Union, Syria, Vietnam, and Yugoslavia. As he states: "It would, moreover, be difficult to name a single brutal dictatorship of the second half of the

20th Century that was not supported by the United States; not only supported, but often put into power and kept in power against the wishes of the population."[20]

There is overwhelming evidence to support the scholars' assertions made above. However, historian and political activist Michael Parenti argues that the dominant class and its allies in the corporate media, political system, and universities refuse to admit that U.S. leaders "have been the greatest purveyors of terrorism throughout the world." The facts are quite clear: the United States and its "surrogate mercenaries have unleashed terror bombing campaigns against unarmed civilian populations … in scores of countries, causing death and destruction to millions of innocents."[21]

Since the Second World War, the greatest U.S. violence has been in Asia—concluding with Vietnam. This included crushing the Huk (Hukbalahap) rebellion in the Philippines, a peasant-led guerrilla movement that led resistance against the Japanese in the Second World War, and continued their struggle against a government elite that had collaborated with the Japanese during that conflict. Using Cold War propaganda that the Huk were Communists, the U.S. military aided the campaign to destroy them by 1954. This period also witnessed the occupation of South Korea and support for the repressive anti-Communist Syngman Rhee, whose policies were similar to the U.S.-installed Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam and helped trigger the devastating Korean War that included bombing North Korea "back to the Stone Age" in one of the greatest aerial attacks in history.[22]

In 1965, the very same year the United States escalated the war in Vietnam, the CIA aided in the massacre of perhaps 500,000 Communists, alleged Communists, and other progressive activists during a military coup in Indonesia, one of the greatest mass murders in history. The late historian Gabriel Kolko writes that it was "certainly one of the most barbaric acts of inhumanity in a century that has seen a great deal of it; it surely ranks as a war crime of the same type as those the Nazis perpetrated." No single act by the United States after 1945 "was as bloodthirsty as its role in Indonesia, for it tried to initiate the massacre, and … to see that the physical liquidation of the PKI [Communist Party of Indonesia] was carried through to its

culmination. Not a single one of its officials in Washington … questioned the policy on ethical or political grounds."[23]

Similarities between Korea and Vietnam include the racist attitudes and actions against people there that helped fuel massacres by U.S. forces in both wars; for example, at No Gun Ri in Korea and My Lai in Vietnam. The death and devastation from the wars in Korea and Vietnam that left more than seven million people dead, and millions more injured and refugees, are the worst suffered by any nations after the Second World War. Too few U.S. citizens know this documented record, having been disabled intellectually and politically—first in their schools, then by the corporate mass media and leading political officials.[24]

During the Cold War, for example, U.S. violence across the world, always masked as a Noble Cause, strengthened the "military-industrial complex" that President Eisenhower warned about in his January 1961 Farewell Address. Five years earlier, however, the prominent sociologist C. Wright Mills analyzed this complex in his groundbreaking and powerful book, *The Power Elite*, a scathing critique of the institutions that later concerned the former president. The influence of this complex, which Mills identified as an "economic-military" link, comprises the all-embracing connection between the Pentagon, industry, Congress, and the academy. It has increased dramatically since Eisenhower's address, devouring trillions of public funds to support the ever-increasing power of the National Security State (NSS). Decades before Eisenhower's Farewell Address, Medal of Honor recipient and former Marine major general Smedley Butler addressed the nature of the U.S. imperial violence and the military-industrial complex of his time, including his own role:

> I spent thirty-three years and four months in active military service as a member of … the Marine Corps.… And during that period I spent most of my time being a high-class muscleman for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism.… I helped make Mexico … safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of a half-dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street.… I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909–1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for the American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested.[25]

This actual history is, and remains, the essence of U.S. policy abroad—always hidden by the Noble Cause principle. According to the late writer and activist Mike Marqusee, public belief in this principle "obstructs knowledge and understanding of United States history and the pattern of its involvements abroad," especially the fact that it acts "like any other imperial power, on the basis of self-interest." U.S. interventions abroad are "presented as an altruistic response to a crisis. Since there is no American empire, no pattern, no habit, or system of extraterritorial domination, the motive for each intervention is assessed at face value," thus denying the actual record. Marqusee laments the U.S. Noble Cause: "Culturally, emotionally, [belief in this principle] curtails human solidarity. More than ever, 'America' is a prison that the U.S. citizenry needs to break out of—in its own interest and in the interests of the victims of U.S. policy."[26]

The Noble Cause principle cannot stand up to the endless violence that spans nearly 240 years of United States history—or more than four hundred years if the count begins with Colonial settler wars against Native Americans. This history is the context within which to understand the American war in Vietnam.

2

French Colonialism and the Origins of the American War in Vietnam

In August 1850 “a French naval squadron … attacked the port city of Da Nang.… This started a war of colonial conquest that, aided by the politics of appeasement by the Vietnamese court, resulted in the takeover of the country in stages until its total annexation by the French in 1884.”[1] In keeping with their long history of struggle against invasions by the Chinese, Mongols, and Japanese, the Vietnamese resisted French colonialism.

Despite this history of resistance to foreign invaders, French colonialism “totally humbled the Vietnamese state and deeply humiliated the people,” writes historian and former Marine Corps intelligence officer David G. Marr. France’s economic policies put new pressures on the peasantry, who were “exposed as never before to the depredations of money lenders and collaborator landlords.” French exports forced more Vietnamese to deal with the “impersonal fluctuations of the imperialist world market.” Though the profound changes brought by French colonialism led to a great deal of “covert intellectual and political ferment,” this ferment was not organized into a systematic and powerful resistance force until 1941, when the Indochinese Communist party (ICP) under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh (meaning “He Who Enlightens”) met and founded the Vietnamese Independence League (Viet Minh). They would lead the Vietnamese to “victory in the August 1945 Revolution and effective leadership of the anticolonial struggle in Vietnam.”[2]

French colonial rule was brutal and violent, especially for peasants. It also antagonized the small but influential group of Western-educated (mostly in France) Vietnamese who played an important role in the nationalist movement that emerged after the First World War. But French suppression of anticolonial efforts drove these Vietnamese nationalists

underground. After 1930, the Indochinese Communist Party led the underground movement, under the leadership of Ho, who would become the greatest figure in the Vietnamese independence struggle. A nationalist and Communist, he had spent thirty years away from his native Vietnam living in England, where he championed independence for Ireland; in France, where he became a founder of the French Communist Party; in the Soviet Union; and in China. Continually imprisoned for his revolutionary efforts, he helped to build a core of guerrilla fighters led by the former history teacher General Vo Nguyen Giap, who would lead the Vietnamese military until the end of the American war in 1975.

During his stay in France, Ho Chi Minh became the spokesman for Vietnamese independence. In 1919, at the Paris Peace Conference at the end of the First World War, he led a group of Vietnamese who attempted to petition the Allied leaders attending, especially U.S. president Woodrow Wilson. According to historian Mark Lawrence, they wished to have Wilson "honor the principle of self-determination that … [he] had repeatedly avowed during the war." Wilson and the other powerful officials ignored Ho Chi Minh's relatively modest appeal, however, "just as they ignored similar demands from groups representing other colonized peoples."[3]

Historian Bernard Fall, the eminent and highly influential French military scholar who was killed in Vietnam in 1967 on patrol with U.S. Marines, states that Ho was brushed off by many aides when he tried to see Wilson, and "finally gave up in despair. He realized that his hopes of "a 'liberal' solution for his country" were dead, and he saw "what the other unsuccessful petitioners were muttering among themselves—the Irish in the lead—armed revolution was the answer."[4]

The Paris experience profoundly affected Ho, and he looked for alternatives to help the anti-colonial struggle. He joined the French Socialist Party, but "quickly grew discouraged by the party's lack of interest in colonial problems" and was influenced by the Communists in the newly formed Soviet Union. He became a founder of the French Communist Party in 1920 and was invited to live and study in Moscow. Lawrence writes that Ho had a mixed experience in the Soviet Union, commencing "an ambivalent relationship with communist powers" that continued for the rest of his life. He also had to deal with the "pervasive scorn" Soviet leaders felt toward agricultural societies such as Vietnam.[5]

From the beginning, French colonialism rested on economic exploitation, but justified it with the argument that it helped the Vietnamese materially and morally. Like all other colonial rulers, the French believed that they were civilizing people even while they brutally exploited Vietnamese workers. More than one in four rubber workers died laboring on the harshest plantations and those who ran away faced execution. This colonial rule, therefore, profoundly changed life for the overwhelming majority of Vietnamese, while it enriched the small elite who worked as colonial administrators for the French. The peasants suffered greatly, and the disparity between the wealthy few and the many poor grew. Out of this oppression, however, arose a militant, Communist-led nationalist movement that would eventually defeat French colonialism.[6]

Brutal prison conditions were a key aspect of this harsh rule, according to historian Peter Zinoman. This brutality backfired for the French, however, as these prisons became places of resistance for a growing and militant Communist Party that organized thousands of jailed activists in political education and action. These inmates “contributed decisively” to the revolutionary movement throughout Vietnam, providing a base for later military struggle against the French after the formation of the Viet Minh. Released, escaped, and amnestied prisoners became the “hardened core of disciplined, experienced, and fiercely loyal cadres skilled in the arts of underground organization.”[7]

The 1930s brought a “dramatic expansion of anticolonial policies in Indochina. It was reflected in the rise of labor activism, the flowering of the radical press, the growth of the Communist Party, the formation of hundreds of popular Action Committees, and a campaign to establish an Indochinese Congress.” These efforts were led by thousands of former political prisoners, many of whom were released in 1939 as part of a widespread amnesty policy implemented by the new French Popular (Left) Front government.[8]

During the Second World War, the French administered the country for the Japanese, and the colonial prison “resumed its role as a focal point of anticolonial activism” as thousands of Communist Party members were imprisoned. As during the early 1930s, this led to a resumption of agitation as political prisoners renewed their organizational and political work. Once

again, the Communists took the lead in the anticolonial resistance against the French.[9]

It was during the Second World War that Viet Minh cadre, who were "armed, carefully trained and indoctrinated," made contact with local village leaders and, as David Marr writes, "began convincing them of the inevitable collapse of the Japanese, of Allied support for the independence of colonial peoples, and of the necessity for village participation in taking over the government and defending it against all enemies." Serious economic problems played a major role in these dramatic and historic changes, especially during the winter of 1944–45 when the increasing demand for rice by the Japanese and the French, breaches in the Red River dike system, and disruption of communications between northern and southern Vietnam because of Allied bombing produced a terrible famine in northern Vietnam, killing an estimated one to two million people.[10]

Near the end of the Second World War, in March 1945, the Japanese disarmed French troops and interned French civilians there; combined with the economic crises and famine, this created a political vacuum that helped to produce the revolutionary movement that would lead to the end of French colonialism. This occurred in part because "enough Vietnamese knew that a proud history and a proud culture were worth fighting for," but also because a revolution had arisen during the French absence that gave "millions of poorer peasants a vision of massive social and economic readjustment once the 'barbarians' were ejected."[11]

In the late 1940s, the French began to fear a Communist victory in China, and they shifted to anti-Communism as the key to their gaining U.S. support on Vietnam. They played this card because they knew that this shift to an anti-Communist rather than a colonial war helped make their case for U.S. assistance. The Eisenhower administration supported them, as it saw the Viet Minh as simply a tool of Soviet and Chinese expansion, even though the Soviet Union had ignored the Vietnamese struggle for independence in its critical early years, and the Viet Minh had gained power four years before the Chinese revolution could possibly provide any material assistance.[12]

Despite all the propaganda about Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh as tools of the Soviet Union, historian Fredrick Logevall points out that Ho could not obtain "meaningful assistance" from Soviet dictator Stalin, who

was more concerned about Europe and thought that Ho was "too independent-minded to be trusted." The French Communist Party, "anxious to appear patriotic and moderate before the metropolitan electorate, repeatedly refused [Ho's] pleas for support, and indeed connived in the venture of reconquest."[13]

Logevall discusses the visit that John F. Kennedy, then a Massachusetts congressman, made to Vietnam in 1951. About his trip, Kennedy noted: "We are more and more becoming colonialists in the minds of the people." The United States should take a different path from the collapsing British and French empires and show that the enemy is not merely Communism but "poverty and want," "sickness and disease," and "injustice and inequality." After returning home, he stated, "In Indochina we have allied ourselves to the desperate effort of the French regime to hang on to the remnants of an empire.… There is no broad general support [for] the native Vietnamese government among the people of that area." It is "a puppet government" and every neutral observer believes that Ho and the Communists would win a "free election."[14] A decade later Kennedy administration officials and the corporate media harshly criticized those citizens who made similar criticisms of Kennedy's support of the U.S.-backed Diem regime.

Some two decades after Kennedy's first assessment of French colonialism, Ho, and U.S. options in Vietnam, Abbot Low Moffat, who had been there at the end of the Second World War, and later headed the State Department's Division of Southeast Asian Affairs, offered the following assessment of Ho Chi Minh:

> I have never met an American … who had ever met Ho Chi Minh who did not reach the same belief: that Ho Chi Minh was *first and foremost* a Vietnamese nationalist. He was also a Communist and believed that Communism offered the best hope for the Vietnamese people. But his loyalty was to his people. When I was in Indo-China it was striking how the top echelon of competent French officials held almost exclusively the same view.[15]

Despite Moffat's glowing comment about Ho Chi Minh, there were different views among OSS personnel in Vietnam regarding him and the Viet Minh, ranging from admiration and sympathy to outright condemnation and hostility based on his Communist philosophy and activism.

Truoung Nhu Tang, a founder of the National Liberation Front who spent thirty years in the resistance movement against the French, Diem, and the United States, was a double agent. After the war ended in 1975, he became “profoundly disillusioned by the massive political repression and economic chaos the new government brought with it,” fleeing Vietnam and living in exile in Paris. A longtime admirer of Ho Chi Minh, Truoung felt that Ho’s motivations were similar to his own, and that the former’s Communism ultimately served the cause of Vietnamese nationalism. Ho had the welfare of the people at heart, and Truoung gave “[the] Northern government the benefit of the doubt on this score, knowing that the restoration of nationhood would be a long and difficult process..” Although Ho was deeply involved with the international Communist movement, he had forged the struggle of independence from nationalism and communism, shaped by a “unique political vision [that] always retained a sensitivity to options and potential allies.”[16]

Although the overwhelming majority of the Vietnamese and some members of the American OSS respected Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh, the Communist-led resistance struggle should not be romanticized. Bitter and repressive French colonial policies shaped internal struggles, including the elimination of rivals, secret and hierarchical decision making, and violent excesses in the land reform program. Ho recognized the land reform excesses, however, and moved to stop the violence and remove the responsible officials. The nature of French colonialism and later direct U.S. intervention forced the Communist leadership to engage in secretive and authoritarian practices. These internal contradictions must be balanced, however, by decades of courage and heroic leadership in the struggle for independence and self-determination, something that could never be imagined or possible under the French or Americans. The Communists offered far greater hope to the Vietnamese than the foreign intervention and repression that nearly destroyed the country.[17]

The Second World War

The Viet Minh led the resistance against the Japanese and the French. During the war, they worked with officers of the OSS who had been sent to Vietnam to help organize guerrilla efforts against the Japanese. The Viet

Minh helped rescue American pilots who were shot down over Indochina, and in return received weapons and training. Essentially "a nationalist-front organization" led by the Indochinese Communist Party the Viet Minh attracted Vietnamese patriots "in a common struggle against the Japanese and the French [by] emphasizing … patriotic themes that would appeal to radicals and moderates alike."[18]

In March 1945, the Japanese overthrew French administrative authorities in Vietnam and imprisoned them and French citizens, and formed a regime headed by the emperor Bai Dai, who had faithfully served the colonial regime. During the period between this takeover and the end of the Second World War in early September 1945, Viet Minh territory "expanded to include six provinces in northern Vietnam. In this 'liberated zone,' entirely new local governments were established, self-defense forces recruited, taxes abolished, rents reduced, and, in some places, land that had belonged to French landlords was seized and redistributed."[19]

By early September 1945, Viet Minh forces had defeated the combined Japanese-French colonialists, and on September 2, before hundreds of thousands of people in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). It became the first former European colony to establish a popular democratic government after the war. At this independence celebration, the opening lines of Ho's speech were taken from the U.S. Declaration of Independence. Americans were the only honored foreign guests, and Major Archimedes Patti of the OSS stood next to General Giap, the commander of the Viet Minh forces. Some Americans who were in Hanoi and Saigon during the war supported the Viet Minh struggle; they "warned of imminent cold war and recommended U.S. withdrawal from the area, [and] also argued against providing assistance to France for the purpose of returning to Vietnam." The Truman administration ignored their recommendations.[20]

At the end of the Second World War, at this moment of independence, David Marr writes, millions of Vietnamese "knew they were making history, not just witnessing it. Many sensed that their lives were changing irrevocably.…" This historic Vietnamese struggle was to be blocked by U.S. allies Britain and France. In late September 1945, the British rearmed some fourteen hundred French soldiers and civilians who "in the name of restoring law and order," rampaged through Saigon, "cursing, beating up,

detaining, and otherwise offending any native encountered." Vietnamese then retaliated by killing more than a hundred and fifty French civilians; many were women and children. Later that fall, British, French, and Japanese troops attacked the Viet Minh near Saigon.[21] Let this historical fact sink in: Japanese troops, who a few months earlier were killing and wounding British and U.S. troops, now joined British forces trying to destroy Vietnamese resistance against the returning French colonialists.

In early 1950, the Vietnamese resistance against the French was strengthened when the People's Republic of China became the first nation to formally recognize the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. China sent American weapons and ammunition it had captured in Korea, and this allowed General Giap to arm new divisions in the fight against the French. Chinese aid later included anti-aircraft units that Giap used in the May 1954 victory over the French at the critical battle of Dien Bien Phu. During this period and into the early years of the American war, the Chinese "exerted considerable influence" over Vietnamese Communists until their own Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s. [22] Relations worsened considerably after President Nixon's 1972 visit to China, eventually leading to war in 1979 when the Chinese invaded Vietnam. President Jimmy Carter supported this invasion, urged on by his national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

After the Japanese surrendered in August 1945, David Marr writes, "the most important question" was how much assistance the United States would provide France; this was done "above all by facilitating the arrival of French troops, equipment, and supplies … Most French soldiers were outfitted with U.S. weapons and uniforms, and they roared around in U.S. jeeps, trucks, and armored cars—a startling, depressing sight for Vietnamese who had hoped for American neutrality, if not outright support." As the Cold War heated up in the late 1940s, the Truman administration increased its economic and military support to the French, becoming more generous after the Chinese Communist Revolution in late 1949, "when Indochina came to be seen as a vital segment of the global anticommunist front line."[23]

Historian Michael Gillen contends that the United States missed an opportunity when its officials did not listen to OSS agents on the ground in Vietnam, such as Lt. Col. Peter Dewey, who wrote from Saigon in

September 1945: “Cochinchina [southern Vietnam] is burning, the French and the British are finished here, and we [the Americans] ought to clear out of Southeast Asia.” Dewey became the first U.S. casualty of the war in Vietnam when he was killed by Viet Minh soldiers at a military checkpoint.[24]

Historians point out that President Franklin Roosevelt was not happy with French colonialism and wished to see it end after the Second World War. Historian Michael H. Hunt argues that Roosevelt’s verbal opposition to French control of Vietnam—something the United States did not oppose during his presidency—was a form of racism that “was common for his generation and that would prove a consistent strand in later U.S. policies.” FDR did not believe that “the peoples of Indochina and other ‘brown people in the East,’ such as the Koreans,” were able “to exercise freedom with wisdom.” [25]

Hunt writes that the August 1945 revolution was “a promising bid for full-fledged independence.” The Viet Minh “commanded the political high ground as the only effective political group … with an untarnished patriotic reputation … and a demonstrated capacity to mobilize rural support. From that position, it had sponsored a government with national pretensions and broad representation.”[26]

Vietnam’s declared independence did not last long, however, as immediately after the Second World War U.S. material support for French colonialism grew dramatically. France desperately needed American troopships and other military equipment to transport its colonial troops to Vietnam. Harold Issacs, a war reporter for *Newsweek*, was in Saigon as these troops came off American ships: there were “thousands every week, first in French transports and then in a long succession of American ships, flying the American flag and manned by American crews.… They marched past cheering crowds of relieved French civilians and moved out … to restore French order.”[27]

Sailors from the USS *Stamford Victory* were among the few Americans to see the sight of “fully armed Japanese soldiers, several weeks after [Victory over Japan] Day, being employed by the British in Vietnam.” The crews of this and other U.S. ships witnessed the Vietnamese reaction. One sailor reported that they “all spoke to us of their hatred of the French and their wonder at the Americans [for] bringing the French invaders back.”

These members of the National Maritime Union (NMU) protested "the policy of the United States Government in chartering ships, flying the American flag," to transport French troops "in order to subjugate the native population of Vietnam."[28] In a stunning shift in history, U.S. vessels brought French troops to Vietnam so they could join recently released Japanese troops to support France's attempt to crush the Vietnamese independence movement. The sailors' action was the first organized antiwar protest against Washington's policy, twenty years before campus protests began in 1965.

The French-Indochina War and U.S. Involvement

Vietnamese resistance against the returning French expanded, and by early 1946, "under their own government and without assistance from any foreign country, the people of Northern and Central Vietnam were free of famine and colonial taxation, and on the way to universal literacy." But these accomplishments did not matter as the French began to retake Vietnam, calling its aggression fighting Communists. The United States presented its alliance with France as protecting the "free world" and defending against the spread of totalitarian Communism. This language was necessary to hide the real purposes of U.S. support. Historian Marilyn Young contends that the American public did not look "directly at the [French] army receiving this aid," which included thousands of French Foreign Legionnaires who had fought for the Nazis.[29] How many Americans knew that these former Nazi troops were part of the French colonial forces attempting to reconquer Vietnam? How many today know this fact?

Gabriel Kolko and H. Bruce Franklin stress the powerful impact of these U.S. decisions to help France in Vietnam. Kolko argues that U.S. support for French colonialism after the war was "logical as a means of stopping the triumph of the Left … not only in that nation but throughout the Far East." When de Gaulle visited President Truman in August 1945, he was told that the United States "favored the return of France to Indo-China. The decision would shape the course of world history for decades." Franklin points out that the White House and the Pentagon "tried from the very beginning to keep their actions secret. When they decided to send

Americans to fight in Vietnam, they conspired at first to wage war covertly, later to conceal how the war was being conducted, and finally to expunge the memory of the entire affair or bury it under mounds of false images."[30]

There was a temporary pause in the French-Viet Minh conflict in March 1946, when France signed an agreement with Ho's government that "recognized the Republic of Vietnam as a Free State … within the … French Union." This government, therefore, was the only legal one in Vietnam. But France quickly withdrew its recognition and set up a client regime in southern Vietnam. The betrayal led to armed conflict when the French navy shelled Haiphong harbor in November 1946, killing an estimated six thousand civilians; a month later, France occupied Hanoi, and the war soon spread throughout all of Vietnam. From the moment the Vietnamese declared their independence in September 1945, and certainly after a free and general election throughout Vietnam in January 1946 resulted in an overwhelming victory for Ho Chi Minh and his supporters, any U.S. involvement against this independent state, whether by supporting the French or setting up a separate regime in the South, was an act of aggression deserving of resistance.

The propaganda from Washington and the mainstream media portrayed the Vietnamese as tools of the Soviet Union, even though the latter did not recognize or aid the Ho government for five years after it declared independence. This is another inconvenient fact that contradicts the story of the Communist conspiracy directed from Moscow. The Vietnamese did not even have strong support from the French Communist Party. Although the French CP was to become the largest political party in France, it was afraid of losing votes if it "acquiesced in the liquidation of France's overseas empire." It remained in the French cabinet and aided the effort to regain control over Vietnam. This support continued until late 1949 "when the party finally adopted a policy of demonstrations and strikes aimed at obstructing the movement of troops and supplies to Vietnam."[31] The claim of an international and monolithic Communist solidarity on behalf of the Vietnamese struggle against the French, therefore, is wrong.

According to historians Michael Hunt and Steven Levine, at the close of the Second World War the United States was far and away the most powerful nation in the world, "approaching the [peak] of their domination in eastern Asia" at the same moment as the Vietnamese Declaration of

Independence in 1945. But Washington did not listen to the vast majority of Vietnamese who had great expectations that it would support their anticolonial struggle against France. What happened in Vietnam, as earlier in the Philippines and South Korea, was that the United States "would take the place of one colonial power and set to work with collaborating in yet another exercise" to maintain the empire. When it came to policies that enhanced national self-determination, the rhetorical "support for independence movements was so blatantly violated by on-the-ground U.S. policies that it generated damaging charges of hypocrisy."[32]

Hypocrisy is a mild term, however, given the death and destruction caused by French colonialists and the refusal of the United States to support the Vietnamese resistance. Whether it was Woodrow Wilson's championing of "democracy" at the same time that U.S. authorities at the Versailles Peace Conference refused to hear Ho's plea for recognition of the Vietnamese, or opposition to nationalist movements after the Second World War, one should never listen to what American officials *say* about colonialism and nationalism. Rather, one should always see what they actually *do*.

According to Gabriel Kolko, it was the Chinese Revolution in late 1949 that caused the United States to reconsider the importance of the French-Vietnamese conflict, even though Washington had supported the French from the end of the Second World War. His view is that Vietnam was a "global" concern for Washington; and it was for this reason that after 1950 it "became the most sustained and important single issue.… Victory rather than a political settlement was necessary because of … other basic and more permanent factors in guiding U.S. policy." U.S. officials were "convinced that the 'domino' theory would operate should Vietnam remain with the Vietnamese people," that is, other countries in Southeast Asia would collapse if the Vietnamese independence struggle won.[33] The dominant perspective thus allowed powerful U.S. officials and their corporate media allies to accuse the Vietnamese revolutionary movement of being controlled and directed from Moscow, a false assertion.

A CIA report, however, revealed that the Viet Minh army represented the "vast majority" of Vietnamese, including "a majority of the generally anti-Communist Catholics" who supported Ho Chi Minh against the French. This report had no influence on U.S. policy, because early in the

French-Vietnamese war, leaders in Washington became “wholly convinced” that the Soviet Union was behind the Vietnamese anticolonial struggle and other revolutionary nationalist movements around the world—and would subvert Washington’s “attainment of its political and economic objectives of a reformed, American-led capitalist world order.”[34]

The long struggle for liberation from French colonialism ended at the battle of Dien Bien Phu on May 7, 1954, when the Vietnamese, led by the Viet Minh, crushed the French forces and gained a historic victory for the independence movement, the first major battlefield defeat of a European colonial power after the Second World War. Through a powerful nationalist appeal the Communist-led Viet Minh “had organized and inspired a poor, untrained, ill-equipped population to fight and ultimately win against a far better equipped and trained army.” On the fifth anniversary of the battle at Dien Bien Phu, General Giap, who led the revolutionary forces, wrote about its “great historic truth: a colonized and weak people, once it has risen up and is united in the struggle and determined to fight for its independence and peace, has the full power to defeat the strong aggressor army of an imperialist country.”[35]

Almost a hundred thousand French soldiers—including colonial troops from Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—died in what the Vietnamese call the Anti-French Resistance War, as well as an estimated 300,000 Viet Minh soldiers. Hundreds of thousands of civilians perished.[36] This staggering human toll was a prelude to an even greater loss of life in the American war. The end of the colonial war also affected the French empire, as Algerians who fought in Vietnam returned to their own country to resist French colonialism there. Remarkably, large numbers of exploited French colonial subjects fought and died for their colonial master, once again revealing the power of rulers to get those they exploit to fight for the very system abusing them.

The Geneva Conference and Agreements

As the French-Vietnamese military struggle was ending, a conference met in Geneva, Switzerland, to settle the conflict. The Geneva Agreements established a cease-fire line in Vietnam, behind which both sides withdrew their military forces, the French to the south, the Viet Minh to the north.

The French were to withdraw from Vietnam, and by 1956 an election would be held to reunify the country. All knowledgeable persons knew that Ho Chi Minh and the Communists would win, something the United States would not allow. It blocked the election it was sure to lose, a decision that shaped all else that followed in Vietnam after 1956. The National Security Council (NSC) understood the propaganda issue involved: “The overall U.S. position in the world would be harmed by U.S. identification with a policy which appears to be directed towards avoidance of elections,” and “world opinion, and for that matter, domestic U.S. opinion, would have difficulty understanding why the U.S. should oppose in Vietnam the democratic procedures which the U.S. had advocated in Korea, Austria and Germany.”[37] This internal NSC admission was not shared with the public.

British filmmaker and journalist Felix Greene reports that the deadlock over issues at Geneva was broken when Ho’s government made some far-reaching concessions. Although the Viet Minh controlled much of the country, they agreed to a temporary division of Vietnam that would give them only about half of it. They specified very particular conditions, however: the temporary separation was not to be permanent; elections were to be held by 1956 for reunification; and neither of the temporary zones could establish “international alliances or receive military help from the outside.” Every government at Geneva accepted these provisions, except the Americans and the French-installed regime in the South.[38] The United States refused to sign the final agreements, but it pledged that it would not “disturb or interfere with what had been settled there.” It also stated that it favored the principle of free elections under United Nations supervision and that countries in the region should determine their own future. In fact, the United States would kill nearly four million Vietnamese to keep them from truly exercising such self-determination.

As is now known, at the time of the Geneva Agreements, CIA agents under the direction of Colonel Edward Lansdale were engaged in sabotage in and around Hanoi. Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett, who covered the war for two decades, reported that Ho Chi Minh “was aware of secret aggression against the North, immediately after the Geneva Accords went into effect.” He and the former Viet Minh were “aware of the American hand behind false rumors—such as those, spread by the Lansdale team, of Chinese troops raping North Vietnamese girls—and the propaganda

campaign to scare Catholics into fleeing to the South to escape the A-bombs [that] would be used against the 'pagans' who remained in the North." Burchett reminds us that Lansdale wrote with pride how one of his teams "had spent the last days of Hanoi in contaminating the oil supply of the bus company … and in writing detailed notes of potential targets for future paramilitary operations." In other words, the United States used a covert operation to disturb the Geneva Agreements that it solemnly pledged it would not disturb.[39]

The head of the French delegation in Geneva, Jean Chauvel, put U.S. actions and intentions around the proposed 1956 elections—that Ho Chi Minh and the Communists would have won hands down—in their proper perspective: "As far as they are concerned, the general elections must be prevented by any excuse whatsoever. The only purpose of the Geneva Agreements, as they see them, is to provide a cover for the political, economic, and military preparations for the conquest." [40]

Historian Gareth Porter also challenges the dominant view in the United States at the time that tyrannical Communist powers, aiming to expand throughout the world, were behind the Vietnamese independence struggle. "The Communist powers did not even attempt to use the Geneva Accords as a framework" to work out a "creative diplomatic compromise" with the United States that might have "avoided the use of force in South Vietnam." They knew that as the dominant power, the United States would resist any compromise. Over the next twenty years, Washington was to prove this contention true, as it refused to engage in serious negotiations regarding the war in Vietnam until forced to do so after the Tet Offensive in early 1968. It is now clear, Porter argues, that Secretary of State Dulles's "hard line against any diplomatic compromise in Geneva … [was] aimed primarily at reinforcing Soviet and Chinese fears that the U.S. might continue the war if the Geneva settlement was not acceptable to Washington."[41]

When it came to the critical years of the Geneva Agreements and aftermath, including the rise of the brutal Diem regime set up by the United States, the following summary by Noam Chomsky bears repeating and reflection: "The record is quote clear that the Viet Minh … accepted the Geneva Accords in good faith and made a serious effort to initiate discussions that would lead to the elections promised in 1956." Diem's regime, however, "took advantage" of this effort and engaged in "an

extensive repression in which thousands were killed and tens of thousands imprisoned. By 1959 a good part of the former Viet Minh political structure had been wiped out."[42]

One provision of the Geneva Agreements would have a profound impact on the future of Vietnam and American public opinion. Some 900,000 Vietnamese living in the North moved to the South, while a smaller number from the South moved to the North. About 200,000 had worked with the French, "together with their dependents and those of the Vietnamese soldiers who had fought with [them]." A large group of these refugees came from two predominantly Catholic districts and "under French pressure, their pastors had organized them into locally based militias to operate under French command." These Catholic refugees were used to condemn Ho Chi Minh's government in the North, because they were "voting with their feet." But the 200,000 Catholics who stayed in the North were not mentioned. Former CIA and White House Indochina specialist Chester Cooper states: "Data subsequently available tend to support the late [historian and journalist] Bernard Fall in his conclusion that '… the mass flight was admittedly the result of an external, intense, well-conducted and … very successful American psychological warfare operation.'"[43]

Journalist Robert Scheer also criticizes the view that the refugee flight was "a repudiation of Viet Minh rule by the Vietnamese people—a mass flight to freedom." This refugee myth was perhaps the most important one put forth by the "Vietnam lobby," a group of American anti-Communist intellectual, political, and religious leaders who supported the handpicked Ngo Dinh Diem to lead South Vietnam, and told the American people about the "miracle of democracy" there. This was accomplished through favorable media coverage, political connections between the Lobby, Congress (that included lobby members) and the Eisenhower administration, and organized public relations campaigns designed to package Diem and his regime.[44]

The refugees elicited much compassion from the American people, who were not informed about the context and facts of this movement, and the orchestrated efforts of the Vietnam lobby. Context and facts, however, are always critical in history, and must be examined before making a judgment about such events, particularly when officially designated U.S. "enemies" are the ones being condemned. With the end of the Indochina War, or Anti-

French Resistance War as the Vietnamese call it, and the Geneva Conference, the Vietnamese independence struggle moved into another phase: the United States replaced France and would continue the war for another twenty years. This emerging American war would be waged under the guise of defending South Vietnam and the “Free World.” In truth, it defended a regime opposed by most of its people.

3

The Diem Regime and President John F. Kennedy

By 1956 the United States had undermined the Geneva Agreements, continued to use the CIA in sabotage operations against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), and blocked the proposed 1956 elections that Ho Chi Minh would surely have won. It had also picked Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic civil servant who had worked for the French and spent three years in exile abroad (1951–54), to head the regime in South Vietnam. The Diem regime was an artificial creation of the United States that existed solely on massive U.S. economic and military aid, including weaponry that directly violated the Geneva Agreements. Widespread graft and corruption were to be its heart and soul, as officials deposited funds in France as a safeguard against political changes. The graft and corruption was so widespread and blatant in the South that even Diem described it "as reaching the proportions of a 'social plague.'"[1]

Diem "was an important figure in the history of the Indochina wars," because the conflict that became the American war originated "as a revolt against [his] regime." Although many people thought of him "as an American puppet" who had been put in power by Washington to "serve [its] objectives in the Cold War," historian Edward Miller questions this view, as recent historical accounts have emphasized Diem's "unwillingness to accept American advice and the fact that his alliance with the United States eventually fell apart. Many scholars have thus come to reject the notion that Diem was merely a creature of the U.S. foreign policy."[2]

Diem was an official in the French imperial administration in the 1930s, although he resigned in protest because of French opposition on a reform issue. This resignation "established his reputation as an uncompromising nationalist, even as it also confirmed his status as a militant and ambitious Catholic leader." During the Japanese occupation (1940–45), Diem became

involved in “a variety of anti-French intrigues,” including establishing a secret political party in Central Vietnam that was filled “overwhelmingly, perhaps exclusively—by Catholics.” In 1944, the French colonial police began to arrest its members, and Diem avoided arrest with the assistance of the Japanese consul in Hue. He then moved to Saigon “where he lived for several months under the protection of the Japanese military.”[3]

During the Resistance war against the French, Diem “adopted a stance of ostensible neutrality, while at the same time taking care to establish and maintain contacts with both of the warring parties.” Shortly after the August revolution in August 1945, he was detained by Viet Minh fighters and taken to meet Ho Chi Minh, who reportedly offered Diem a position in a Viet Minh unity government. Diem refused Ho’s offer because he “would not give in to his demand for control over certain policy matters.” In mid-1949, Diem announced that he would not collaborate with the Viet Minh resistance against the French.[4]

During Diem’s three-year exile from Vietnam, a number of prominent Americans, part of the Vietnam lobby group, met and supported him. Miller states that it is clear that part of Diem’s appeal to these Americans lay in his staunch anti-Communism. His time in the United States came at “the high-water mark of McCarthyism, a period when anticommunist credentials were [critical] for any foreign leader who hoped to win American support for a cause.”[5] His anticommunism was *the* essential ingredient; had he been a nationalist and a leftist with sympathies for the Viet Minh, those prominent Americans would have rejected him.

Ralph McGehee, a twenty-five-year veteran of the CIA who spent years in Vietnam, draws a different picture of Diem’s rise to power. According to McGehee, Diem arrived in Saigon in mid-1954 and was greeted by Colonel Edward Lansdale, head of the CIA’s mission in Saigon. Diem was “opposed by virtually all elements of South Vietnamese society.… What he did have was the complete support of … Lansdale and all the money, manpower, weapons, training, propaganda, and political savvy” of the CIA. Lansdale helped to establish a South Vietnamese government for Diem, first by secretly operating in North Vietnam and influencing individual Catholics and Catholic armies who had been “deserted by the French to flee south.” His teams “spread horror stories of Chinese Communist regiments raping Vietnamese girls and taking reprisal against villages. This confirmed fears

of Chinese occupation under the Viet Minh." The stories were fabricated, and did not admit that at least 200,000 Catholics remained in the North after Geneva. The mostly Catholic refugees that fled to the South were aided by free transportation on the CIA's own airline, Civil Air Transport, and U.S. Navy ships.[6]

The CIA's refugee operation worked to convince Catholics to flee to the South, "thereby providing Diem with a source of reliable political and military cadre, but it also duped the American people into believing that the flight of the refugees was a condemnation of the Viet Minh by the majority of Vietnam." The CIA created a false story out of thin air to justify U.S. involvement: "The Communist North was invading the Free World South." Washington ordered the agency "to sustain that illusion through propaganda and, through covert operations, to make the illusion a reality.… Unfortunately, nearly everyone, including later policymakers, was deceived by this big lie."[7]

Diem and the Geneva Agreements

The critical post-Geneva issue was the national election for reunification called for by the agreements. Once it became clear that Diem, with U.S. support, was going to lose, they conspired to block it. Historian George Kahin writes about this absolutely critical decision:

> In mid-1955 … Diem—with U.S. encouragement—announced that the elections would not be held.… Having chosen not to carry out the heart of the Geneva Agreements, Diem made civil war inevitable. For when a military struggle … ends on the agreed condition that the competition will be transferred to the political level, the side which repudiates the agreed conditions can hardly expect that the military struggle will not be resumed.[8]

All of the subsequent developments during the Diem era arose from the failure of the United States and the regime to uphold this fundamental provision of the agreements.

To understand the nature and rise of the National Liberation Front (NLF, but called by the pejorative term "Viet Cong" in the United States) during the Diem regime, historian David Hunt attempts to get underneath "regime changes, military campaigns, and big-power politics" for a history that emphasizes "everyday realities at the village level." These realities are

documented in a series of interviews put together by the RAND Corporation for the Pentagon between 1965 and 1968 dealing with "the motivation and morale" of NLF fighters from a province not far from Saigon who defected or were imprisoned by the Diem regime. The NLF core group lived in an area that had a "history of activism [and] played a key role in the struggle against the French, the Saigon government, and the United States." In Hunt's view, these "poor, largely uneducated country people … presented a rich commentary" on village life in the region.[9]

The story they told is that NLF resistance against the Diem regime, and ultimately the United States, was not created by Communist Party directives coming down from Hanoi or the NLF leadership in the South, but from "agendas and leaderships that took shape at the grassroots level." As one informant stated, the NLF cadres had many "firsthand experiences in class struggle and political activities. Since they belonged to the poor class, they had known many hard experiences of the underprivileged rural people." Therefore, their political organizing was based "on the common thinking of the peasants and adopted methods suitable to the rural people's thought and situation in carrying out these activities." This is why they "enjoyed the sympathy and confidence of the peasants."[10]

During the war against the French, Communist leaders asked all Vietnamese to oppose the French, and in the North even more affluent village leaders and landlords joined the Communist Party. In the South, however, the former Viet Minh cadres ignored this advice and forced large landlords to flee and liberated tens of thousands of acres, turning them over to the poor and landless. By 1960, NLF activists in the South worked to overthrow "the entire socioeconomic elite which constituted the foundation of the Saigon regime. These events call attention to the revolutionary temper of the popular movement in the area and to the relative autonomy that characterized its relations with the [Communist] party."[11] This assessment directly contradicts the official U.S. view that the NLF resistance followed direct orders from Ho Chi Minh and Communists in the North, who in turn got their marching orders from the Soviet Union and China.

The terror and coercion that were the essence and foundation of the Diem regime—with U.S. knowledge and approval—fueled the NLF resistance. Joseph Buttinger, a former Diem adviser and supporter,

describes the terrorism that occurred during the early post-Geneva period. In June 1956 Diem organized two massive attacks with his army against regions that were controlled by the Viet Minh that had led the resistance struggle against the French, attacks forbidden by the Geneva Agreements. Buttinger dismisses the Viet Minh claims that that there was "systematic torture, the shelling and burning of 'uncooperative' villages, and the arrest of whole families on the strength of denunciations." However, he does assert that in these manhunts "there can be no doubt … that innumerable crimes and absolutely senseless acts of repression … were committed.… Most of the real Communists escaped.… Those who were caught were usually killed, and judging by the treatment the South Vietnamese Army later accorded to the captured guerrillas, most likely also were tortured."[12]

Jeffrey Race, former U.S. Army adviser in South Vietnam, confirms this policy, pointing out that the regime's manhunts destroyed "almost the entire political apparatus the [Viet Minh] had concealed in the South." The Agreements specifically forbade any reprisals against former resistance fighters, but Diem "employed every means to track them down and arrest them.… After arrest, the cadres would be liquidated." After Geneva, former Viet Minh guerrillas and supporters had engaged in peaceful political action to prepare for the 1956 elections. The regime's terrorism throughout the South "finally left the Viet Minh and other political dissidents no alternative but armed struggle against Diem's suppression."[13]

Diem began to centralize power and used the army to increase his control of rural zones outside of Saigon, where he could only find support among Catholics. The noted French historian on Vietnam, Bernard Fall, asserts that the regime "began to take on highly resented police state features long before the guerrilla threat justified the adoption of some of them for the purpose of restoring national security." In 1956, the regime made "perhaps its most fateful decision. In defiance of one of the most hallowed Vietnamese traditions … the Saigon administration abolished by a stroke of a pen elected village chiefs and village councils and replaced them by appointive members"—something the French did not do. The elected village chiefs "were replaced by centrally appointed individuals who, in many cases, were not even native to the village.…" And in 1959, the regime established kangaroo courts that handed out death sentences for

even petty offenses, ensuring that "all South Vietnamese opposition—whether Communist or not—had to become subversive, and did."[14]

Commenting on the end of the war with the French and the period after Geneva and the rise of Diem, Truoung Nhu Tang, a founder of the NLF, pointed out that the rise of the struggle in the South that would lead to the Front in 1960 was built upon the Viet Minh movement "for independence that had already developed its own philosophy and means of action. Of that movement, Ho Chi Minh was the spiritual father … and we looked naturally to him and his government for guidance and aid.… And yet, this struggle was also our own." Most members of the NLF were not Communists; in fact, "many scarcely thought of themselves as political, at least in any ideological way." They reacted to Diem as a leader who "made himself widely detested, a dictator who could look for support only to the Northern Catholic refugees and to those who made money from his schemes." Worst of all, he "murdered many patriots who had fought in the struggle against France and had tied his existence to the patronage of the United States."[15]

To this day, most Americans do not know that Michigan State University worked secretly with the CIA to build up the Diem regime by training, equipping, and financing the civil militia and police force. MSU faculty trained South Vietnamese to fingerprint and maintain records on political opponents, and supplied the militia and police with weapons, ammunition, and military vehicles. This Michigan State–CIA link was later exposed in *Ramparts* magazine; its report in April 1966, "The University on the Make," ripped apart the propaganda that had been fed to the American public about the wonders of the Diem regime, and challenged citizens to ask some vital questions about why a university was engaged in such efforts.

Historian Jeremy Kuzmarov analyzes this MSU program—developed with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)—that organized "a far-reaching surveillance apparatus and expanded the prison system, in which torture and other abuses proliferated." MSU and USAID advisers trained thousands of Diem regime police "in riot control and counter-insurgency, contributing to extensive human rights violations." These programs aided the regime's ability to arrest all political dissidents, which fueled the resistance against Diem. According to Paul Harwood,

head of CIA covert action in Saigon during this period, thousands died in this terrorist anti-Communist campaign. As the U.S. war expanded under President Kennedy, police training "became ever more central to American 'pacification' efforts and contributed to the torture and killing of thousands of revolutionary fighters and civilians. In 1962, as napalm and bombing attacks were launched, the OPS [U.S. Office of Public Safety] took over" from the MSU group.[16]

U.S. officials were aware that Diem was running a terrorist state. David Hotham, correspondent in South Vietnam for the London *Times* and *The Economist* in 1955–57, made the following observation:

> The West is backing, with its eyes open … a reactionary police state.… The Asians are intelligent people, and well able to contrast the declaration of principles of … the United States, with the facts of the regime under which they live. No intelligent Vietnamese can fail to be cynical when he hears American professors lecturing of political freedom in one province, while Diem's army and police are imprisoning thousands of suspected Communists without trial in another.[17]

The Pentagon Papers noted:

> Enough evidence has now been accumulated to establish that peasant resentment against Diem was extensive and well founded. Moreover, it is clear that the dislike of the Diem government was coupled with resentment toward Americans. For many peasants the War of Resistance against French-Bao Dai rule never ended: France was merely replaced by the U.S., Bao-Dai's mantle was transferred to … Diem.[18]

The ruthless nature of the regime was apparent to anyone not blinded by U.S. propaganda. Years later, Diem's last military chief of staff, General Tran Van Don, acknowledged the excesses of a regime that Washington claimed or imagined was democratic: "They resorted to arbitrary arrests, confinement in concentration camps for undetermined periods of time without judicial guarantees or restraints, and assassinations of people suspected of Communist leanings. Their use of Gestapo-like political raids and torture were known and decried everywhere."[19]

Despite Diem's brutal regime, in 1957 he was invited to the United States for an official visit and treated as a hero. It was organized and handled by a public relations firm and the American Friends of Vietnam (the Vietnam lobby) that formed in support of Diem to tell American people about the "miracle of democracy" emerging in South Vietnam. This was

accomplished through favorable media coverage, political connections between the Vietnam lobby, Congress (that included lobby members), the Eisenhower administration, and organized public relations campaigns. During his visit, Diem addressed Congress and then traveled to New York City, where he met with Cardinal Spellman, the most powerful Catholic in the country. The *New York Times* declared that Diem "added a strongly spiritual, rather than political note in his definition' of democracy and that [with] such a declaration … Thomas Jefferson would have no quarrel.… This is straight talk from a courageous man."[20]

A critical part of the regime's terror was the Strategic Hamlet Program, established by the United States and Diem, a plan to relocate, often by force, South Vietnamese peasants to isolate them from the NLF. This attempt was bitterly resented by a peasantry forced to leave their ancestral homes, and ultimately led to increased anger at and resistance against the regime. It was similar if not identical to earlier French efforts: "All failed dismally because they ran into resentment if not active resistance by peasants at whose control and safety, then loyalty, they were aimed."[21] The terror that was central to the pacification program was especially brutal on the rural population. The Dallas *Morning News* stated:

> Vietnamese farmers are forced at gunpoint into these virtual concentration camps. Their homes, possessions and crops are burned..… The anti-communist Democratic Party of South Vietnam told the ICC [International Control Commission, which was supposed to monitor compliance with the Geneva Agreements] that decapitation, eviscerations, and public display of murdered women and children are common.[22]

These were the very terrorist acts that Diem accused the NLF of committing; despite this, U.S. officials enthusiastically supported the program from the beginning.

John F. Kennedy and Vietnam

As NLF resistance gained strength and began to defeat Diem forces in 1960 and 1961, the Kennedy administration escalated the conflict with increased military aid, as well as training for Diem's Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps, among the most brutal and corrupt forces of the regime. In addition, helicopter units, disguised as U.S. advisers, began attacking NLF

strongholds and unarmed villages. During this period, the American public was led to believe that the conflict against the NLF was being won or wound down. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara testified before Congress in March 1962 that he was “optimistic” over prospects for U.S. success and “encouraged at the progress the South Vietnamese are making.”[23] These inflated and erroneous declarations of progress were common during the Kennedy years.

A year earlier, in May 1961, Kennedy approved a plan to send four hundred Special Forces troops to engage in covert warfare against North Vietnam. “Undercover teams were to be infiltrated in the north for purposes of ‘sabotage and light harassment.’ Overflights … were to be conducted as well; their mission was ‘to harass the Communists and maintain morale of the North Vietnamese population,’” the very same people who fought against the French for decades and now resisted U.S. aggression against their country. According to historian Bruce Miroff, this “marked Kennedy’s first major escalation of American involvement in Vietnam.… The sending of Green Berets and the program for covert warfare pointed to the conception of a ‘subterranean’ war, largely hidden from public view.”[24]

Ralph L. Stavins, a former member of the Institute for Policy Studies, a Washington think tank, details Kennedy’s “private war” against Vietnam, which began shortly after he took office in January 1961. The various programs he approved were kept secret from the public, or explained in such a way that most citizens had no knowledge about them. By the end of 1961, this private war involved the covert campaign against the North “and the concealed use of U.S. air and ground combat personnel against the Viet Cong in South Vietnam.” By the time Kennedy was assassinated in late November 1963, the United States had 16,500 troops in South Vietnam “pretending they were not fighting, and the Special Forces were executing a host of covert programs in North Vietnam.” All of these programs answered to the White House; all were violations of the 1954 Geneva Agreements.[25]

In 1961, a defoliation recommendation came to Kennedy from his Special Group for Counter-Insurgency, co-chaired by General Maxwell Taylor and Robert Kennedy, who was an ardent supporter of a chemical warfare attack against the Vietnamese—the chemical that would later be known as Agent Orange. Both they and American soldiers have suffered for decades from the effects of this criminal program. Robert Kennedy did

become increasingly critical of the war's progress, though his critique did not extend to the Noble Cause principle or the basic premises and policies of the conflict itself. Stavins, who had access to notes from the Group, comments that Kennedy approved the defoliation program, "originally called Operation Hades, and subsequently accorded the euphemism Operation Ranchhand." Although limited at first, it soon became a program of crop destruction. "The expanded program received strong financial and political support.… Thus, Washington was able both to authorize criminal programs and evade any responsibility for them."[26] These Kennedy programs continued under Lyndon Johnson.

Beginning in 1962, Kennedy designated a special committee to help run his private war. It supervised and controlled all CIA activities, and had jurisdiction over "every important covert program conducted anywhere in the world, including Vietnam." Key members included the deputy director of the CIA, and Kennedy's national security advisor. It organized the Desoto destroyer patrols that operated along the Chinese and North Vietnamese coasts that later became involved in the Gulf of Tonkin crisis in August 1964. The covert program against the North also included amphibious raids by Diem forces against Northern coastal areas and kidnapping. The committee directed "the unofficial policy of the U.S. government toward Vietnam during the private war [including] the disguised use of U.S. combat troops" within the South, all under Kennedy's direct control.[27]

Kennedy and Other Policies

It is critical to examine Kennedy's policies on two important international events that reveal the historical context within which he acted in Vietnam. The first is the fraudulent "missile gap" of 1960; the second is his aggression against Cuba and other nations in Latin America.

In January 1960, CIA Director Allen Dulles told President Eisenhower that there was "no evidence that the [Soviet Union] was carrying out a crash program of missile construction.… Recently published evidence has revealed, however, that Kennedy knew from the beginning of his administration that there was no missile gap, contrary to his own statements." Dulles had briefed him prior to his November 1960 election,

informing Kennedy that “not a single Soviet ICBM site had been found, despite repeated U-2 flights.”[28]

Kennedy’s fraudulent missile gap claim was blown when Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara examined official data on American and Soviet military strength, and announced in early 1961 that there was no missile gap. This accurate disclosure was quickly countered when Kennedy’s press secretary, Pierre Salinger told newsmen that he “was speaking with the approval of the President when he termed the findings of the Secretary of Defense ‘absolutely wrong.’”[29] It was Kennedy who was absolutely wrong, however, ignoring the evidence for a huge military and nuclear buildup.

Historian Gerard J. DeGroot contends that the missile gap issue was an “invented” crisis; according to Herbert York, science adviser for the Pentagon and White House, it was “bogus.” This missile gap followed the earlier (1955–57) “bomber gap” that scholar and U.S. Air Force veteran H. Bruce Franklin calls “a public-relations coup successfully engineered by politicians, generals, and industrialists to scare up many more billions of dollars for SAC [the Strategic Air Command], aerospace corporations, and related military-industrial interests.”[30]

When it came to Cuba and Latin America, historians Greg Grandin and Stephen Rabe, and the late journalist Richard Walton have exposed the true nature of Kennedy’s views and actions. Grandin tells us that Kennedy, “who campaigned in the 1960 presidential election as a committed militarist,” as president “ordered the military to create a branch of the Special Forces that could operate with more flexibility in the third world” and created an office within his administration to organize special-warfare policy. Although Kennedy clearly pushed the rhetoric of idealism with the Alliance for Progress, his program to establish economic cooperation between the United States and Latin America, the focus must be kept on his actual policies in the region:

> But while Kennedy’s revolutionary rhetoric encouraged those who sought change, his actions empowered those who opposed it, the most illiberal forces in the hemisphere, men who despised democrats and political liberals as much as they hated card-carrying Communists.… It was during this period that national intelligence agencies fortified and, in some cases, created by the United States … began to transform themselves into the command centers of the region’s death-squad system, which throughout the 1970s and 1980s executed hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans and tortured tens of thousands more.… Millions were driven into exile.[31]

During Kennedy's presidency, Rabe reports, there were military coups against six elected presidents in Latin America, regimes that "carried out vicious campaigns against [civilians] that evoked popular comparisons with the Nazi terror in Central Europe in the 1930s. The term *desaparecidos*, those who simply 'disappeared,' became commonplace to describe those Latin Americans who came under military custody." This terror, as well as economic and military support, unfolded with Kennedy's knowledge and approval. He also approved Operation Mongoose, run by his brother Robert who was the attorney general, an organized campaign of terrorism and sabotage against Cuba in blatant violation of the UN Charter and the U.S. Constitution. "Ten days before his assassination, Kennedy approved additional sabotage operations." These acts of war were kept secret, virtually unknown to the American people.[32]

Noam Chomsky discusses this "murderous terrorist war designed to bring 'the terrors of the earth' to Cuba, in historian and Kennedy adviser Arthur Schlesinger's phrase, referring to the campaign assigned by the president to Robert Kennedy as JFK's highest priority." The attacks not only killed thousands of people and created massive destruction in that country, but "the terrors of the earth were a major factor in bringing the world to the brink of a terminal nuclear war.… The administration resumed the terrorist attacks as soon as the missile crisis subsided, and they continued for many years after."[33]

Richard J. Walton focuses on Kennedy the Cold Warrior and his first State of the Union address. To ensure that "American arms [were] 'sufficient beyond doubt,' he said immediate measures would be taken to increase airlift capacity, to speed the Polaris subbuilding program, and to 'accelerate our entire missile program.'" Two weeks after Eisenhower warned about the military-industrial complex in his farewell address, Kennedy was "accusing the lifelong soldier of not providing sufficient strength to protect American national security." Soon after becoming president, he began a terrorist campaign against Cuba, including the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961. Before it, Kennedy had stated that there would be no intervention by the United States. After the invasion was crushed, he "refused to admit American responsibility," stating that any "'unilateral American intervention … would have been contrary to our traditions and to our international obligations.'" Walton offers a scathing response—

Washington planned the invasion: “The exiles used American equipment. They were trained by American military men.… The warplanes were American, flown by Americans. American ships carried the invaders, and American naval units accompanied them. Americans were killed in the operation.”[34]

Kennedy’s views reflected Eisenhower’s domino theory, which was used to convince the public that the United States had to stay the course in Vietnam, starting with its support of French colonialism. According to Noam Chomsky, “It is fashionable today to deride the domino theory, but in fact it contains an important kernel of plausibility, perhaps truth. National independence and revolutionary social change, if successful, may very well be contagious.” It is an ideological threat to American dominance, and thus must be stopped. If national liberation movements and revolutionary social change spread, “there would be a serious impact on the global system dominated by the United States and United States–based international corporations.”[35]

To forestall such a possibility, block radical social change, and maintain U.S. dominance, therefore, Chomsky writes that Vietnam had to serve “as a test case” and taught “a harsh lesson.” Countries that wanted to break free of that dominance “must observe the rules of the international system determined by the powerful.” Developing countries like Vietnam must not engage in national liberation struggles that would allow them to escape the U.S.-dominated international system and focus on their own basic needs. “If they are so foolhardy as to disobey the international rules, they will be subjected to subversion, blockade, or even outright destruction by the global judge and executioner.” The Vietnamese courageously and heroically resisted the U.S. “global judge and executioner,” but they were grievously weakened and unable to put forth the hopes once thought possible under independence and socialism.[36]

Andrew Bacevich reminds us that it was Kennedy who increased the U.S. military presence in South Vietnam from some nine hundred to “nearly seventeen thousand ‘advisers.’ Eased restrictions on U.S. military personnel” so they could engage “in combat operations or in combat support operations like Operation Ranch Hand … more than doubled the level of material support provided” to Diem’s army. Bacevich contends that Kennedy “did nothing in his public presentations to refute claims” made by

his national security advisers “that South Vietnam represented a vital U.S. national security interest. [He] permitted members of his inner circle to conspire with [South Vietnamese] generals” who wanted to get rid of Diem, who had been installed by the United States. This is not the picture of Kennedy that his admirers have put forth over the decades since his death.[37]

According to George Kahin, Kennedy shared Eisenhower’s worldview and premises about Vietnam. In order to avoid defeat there he had to continue Eisenhower’s policy that provided U.S. economic and military aid to the Diem regime, “despite his growing awareness that the Diem regime was unpopular, fragile, and lacking in any substantive foundation.” His aggressive policy toward the Vietnamese independence movement became evident in the first week of his presidency, when he “reiterated his desire to mount guerrilla operations inside North Vietnam itself, regarding this as a means of raising the morale of Diem’s regime.” This was four years before any official U.S. agency claimed there were any North Vietnamese regular troops in the South.[38]

Gabriel Kolko states that when Kennedy became president, a key issue “possessed” Washington: U.S. strength in the world. The failure at the Bay of Pigs haunted the administration, a setback to Kennedy personally and U.S. policy in general. Vietnam, therefore, was “becoming a test case in counterinsurgency, and with an eye to Laos, Cuba, and the entire world, the administration was to begin a long series of escalations, each raising the ante to establish credibility.” To do this, of course, meant that the United States could not abandon its aggression in Vietnam and support of the Diem regime.[39]

Richard Walton’s overall insights on Kennedy and Vietnam are needed to counter the uncritical view that admirers and scholars have put forth. The root causes of Kennedy’s attack on Vietnam are very simple: “he was an anti-Communist American leader who had little comprehension of the revolutionary world caused by the breakup of the great European empires.” The conflict’s “terrible consequences” were his “responsibility, for he launched America on the course of war.” Under Kennedy, Vietnamese suffered and died “not in pursuit of their own goals but because an elite safe in Washington was to will it so.” When all is said and done, the war was his “enduring legacy.”[40]

Kennedy: Some Conclusions

The controversy around the American war in Vietnam includes the important question of whether Kennedy planned to withdraw American forces from Vietnam during his presidency. Chomsky, Gareth Porter, and Walton argue against this thesis; and there are some who support it.[41] The public record, however, is clear when it comes to his actions, as historian Mark Lawrence argues: "Indeed, when the war turned against South Vietnam in 1963, Kennedy stepped up U.S. military involvement in unprecedented levels," surely not the signal one gives when one is planning to withdraw from an armed conflict.[42]

In Chomsky's view, the issue is whether JFK, "despite his 1961–1962 escalation and his militant public stand, planned to withdraw *without* victory.…" Kennedy intellectuals and large segments of the left argue that he was planning to do this, but it was stopped by his assassination. But in early November 1963, two weeks before Kennedy was killed, "there is not a phrase in the voluminous internal record that even hints at withdrawal without victory. JFK urges everyone to 'focus on winning the war'; withdrawal is conditional on victory, and motivated by domestic discontent with Kennedy's war." There was no real change when Lyndon Johnson becomes president.[43] The massive increases in military spending, the escalation of U.S. weaponry and involvement in Vietnam, the attacks against Cuba, and the efforts to subvert and overthrow democratically elected governments in Latin America do not appear to be the policies of a leader planning to lose Southeast Asia and come to terms with the dramatic changes sweeping the world.

Gareth Porter also questions the myth of withdrawal from Vietnam, citing the "denial by Robert F. Kennedy in an oral history interview that the president had seriously considered withdrawal"; Secretary of State Dean Rusk's observation that Kennedy "never mentioned a phase-out of U.S. troops from South Vietnam in any of their 'hundreds' of conversations on Vietnam"; and McGeorge Bundy's admission that he "could not recall any involvement by Kennedy in the withdrawal issue before October 1963."[44]

The National Liberation Front

George Kahin and John Lewis assert, in *The United States in Vietnam*:

> Contrary to U.S. policy assumptions, all available evidence shows that the revival of the civil war in the South in 1958 was undertaken by southerners at their own—not Hanoi's—initiative. Insurrection activity against the Saigon government began in the South under southern leadership not as a consequence of any dictates from Hanoi, but contrary to Hanoi's injunctions. Captured documents and later interviews with prisoners make it clear that guerrillas in the South felt that Hanoi had been reluctant to authorize much agitation beyond political action.[45]

Despite the Diem regime's massive repression, which was the fundamental reason for the resistance in the South, the National Liberation Front grew rapidly and soon had some 300,000 supporters. Among them were "prominent southern dissidents with no open ties to the Communist cause." Most were professionals, including many teachers. In March 1960, the dissidents declared themselves openly, issuing a declaration that "reflected the climax of their frustrations and impatience with Hanoi's long insistence upon a primarily political struggle. Reviewing their six years of suffering at the hands of what they refer to as 'the American-Diemists,' they accused them of having 'declared open war.'"[46] In December of 1960, they formally organized themselves as the NLF, appealing to a wide spectrum of people across South Vietnam with a broad leadership of Communists as well as representatives from various patriotic groups.

The actual history of the NLF, therefore, contrasts with the Kennedy administration's propaganda that North Vietnam had organized and directed the NLF's aggression against the democratic Diem regime. In 1961, when the State Department issued its official White Paper titled "A Threat to the Peace," Secretary of State Dean Rusk said that it documented the "elaborate program of subversion, terror and armed infiltration carried out under the direction of … Hanoi." It proved, with "extensive documentation," that North Vietnam had repeatedly violated the Geneva Agreements; South Vietnam, therefore, justifiably needed U.S. aid to defend itself against this attack.[47]

The official Washington and corporate mass media view—that terrorism was a fundamental cause of the revolutionary movement's struggle against the Diem regime—is rejected by Eqbal Ahmad, the noted scholar on revolutionary movements. The "outside-agitator, terrorist, and subversion" thesis, the idea that a guerrilla movement "can be controlled and

commanded by a foreign or externally based government, ignores the organizational, psychological and political facts of revolutionary warfare." Mass support is critical, as "winning and maintaining popular support remains the central objective." Political factors are paramount, and such support depends upon the "moral alienation of the masses from the existing government." It is not created by "conspiracy," but by social and historical conditions. Ahmad's observations expose the bankrupt view of Rusk and others who argued that the NLF had "no significant popular following," and that terror was its main avenue of support. Guerrilla warfare "requires a highly committed but covert civilian support that cannot be obtained at gunpoint. The outstanding feature of guerrilla training is the stress on scrupulously 'correct and just' behavior toward civilians." Ahmad added, "Revolutionary war … does not require only discontent among the masses but also a sense of desperation and a grim determination to end injustice and humiliation. It demands patience, prolonged suffering, and a determined conspiracy of silence and militancy."[48]

Although Ahmad's insights on the nature of guerrilla warfare clearly apply to the NLF, and correctly assess the conditions and context that help to fully understand the origins and nature of the resistance to the Diem regime, readers should not romanticize its use of counter-violence, even though it was dramatically less than that used against it. Examining this counter-violence, Bernard Fall estimated that the NLF killed or kidnapped between 15,000 and 16,000 village officials during the war against the regime through 1965, and probably killed another 5,000 in that year alone, the same year the U.S. escalated the conflict.[49] In Vietnam, as throughout the history of violent conflicts, brutal repression elicits a harsh reaction; support for the NLF resistance against the Diem regime and far greater U.S. violence should not ignore this reality.

JFK and the Overthrow of Diem

The years of terror finally caught up with Diem, as the resistance forces continued to grow and regime troops continued to be defeated and desert in ever-increasing numbers. U.S. officials concerned over the deterioration of the regime were clearly alarmed when, in 1963, it was discovered that Diem's brother Ngo Dinh Nhu had contacted officials from North Vietnam

and top-ranking NLF representatives in the South regarding a possible settlement of the war. Diem stated in late September 1963 that "he had agreed with the North on the outlines of a peace settlement that would include a cease-fire, the departure of U.S. forces, the acceptance of N.L.F. representatives in his government, and an election in which the Communists could participate."[50] But the Kennedy administration could never allow a settlement that would force American withdrawal and the inclusion of the NLF and Communists in any South Vietnamese government—even if decided democratically by the Vietnamese themselves.

To resolve the crisis, Kennedy and his national security officials worked with South Vietnamese generals to overthrow Diem, an event that resulted in his and Nhu's assassination. The administration's actual involvement was in stark contrast with the official view shared with the American people: deep concern for the fate of the regime and the South Vietnamese people. The truth kept from the public is that Kennedy officials supported the military officers involved in overthrowing Diem. The Pentagon Papers stated that "the U.S. must accept its full share of responsibility" for the Diem coup, because beginning in August 1963 Washington "authorized, sanctioned and encouraged the coup efforts." Immediate U.S. concern was how to react to the coup in terms of an official public posture. A message from Secretary of State Rusk to Ambassador Lodge "stressed the need to underscore publicly the fact that this was not so much a coup as an expression of national will."[51]

Kennedy was reportedly shocked by the murders of Diem and Nhu. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Kennedy's special adviser, states that Diem's death "upset Kennedy partly because he was a humane man and didn't like people being killed—particularly perhaps other heads of state—but in part because he may have feared that this was going to pull us in."[52] This is an extraordinary statement given JFK's attempts to have Cuban leader Fidel Castro assassinated, as well as policies in Latin America that led to the deaths and torture of hundreds of thousands of people and the eventual forced exile of millions.

Some things are clear about the nine-year Diem-JFK period. The Department of Defense analysts who wrote the Pentagon Papers contended that it "was a situation without good alternatives"; although the Diem regime offered some "stability and authority, its repressive actions … had

permanently alienated popular support with a high probability of victory for the Viet Cong." They further contend that neither Kennedy nor any other president could have done anything different: the basic choices were the only choices then and they remained the only choices he could have made.[53] These analysts are wrong on both counts. There was a good alternative: the liberation struggle led by the NLF to free the country from all foreign invaders and their client regimes. Since the Pentagon Papers embrace the Noble Cause principle and the fundamental premises of U.S. foreign policy, however, this alternative cannot be considered. The adamant refusal of the United States to do this at the end of the regime prepared the ground for the massive escalation of the war under President Lyndon Johnson.

4

President Johnson and Escalation of the War

In late 1963, soon after President Johnson took office, significant planning took place within the U.S. government to escalate the war. In his first Vietnam policy statement, Johnson ordered officials at the State Department to "demonstrate to the world the degree to which the Viet Cong [that is, the National Liberation Front] is controlled, sustained and supplied from Hanoi.…" The *Pentagon Papers* reveal, however, that there was no known evidence of any regular North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam until April 1965, that is, after the United States began a bombing campaign against the North and increased combat ground troops in the South in March. Added to the false so-called foreign aggression story was that of Chinese expansion: "Over this war—all Asia—is another reality: the deepening shadow of Communist China.… The contest in Vietnam is part of a wider pattern of aggressive purposes."[1] In fact, the Vietnamese had resisted Chinese domination for centuries.

Despite accurate U.S. intelligence reports showing that most of the NLF forces were locally recruited, with little evidence that they relied on external supplies and support from North Vietnam, Washington continued to feed the public the false party line on the "war of aggression" from the North, using faked intelligence provided by the CIA. This disinformation was accepted, according to CIA veteran Ralph W. McGehee, because Washington "needed additional evidence to justify the war to foreign and domestic audiences and to sustain the view that the insurgency was an invasion of the South by the North." To support this bogus claim, in early 1965 the State Department issued its White Paper on "Aggression from the North: The Record of North Viet-Nam's Campaign to Conquer South Viet-Nam." The White Paper "relied on contrived CIA intelligence to support [its] arguments, … based in part on evidence planted by the CIA. The

Agency conducted at least two covert operations to prove the paper's thesis."[2]

To justify escalation and the outside aggressor thesis, it was necessary, in the words of journalist and filmmaker Felix Greene, "to convince the American people that the war in the South was not a liberation struggle against U.S. forces but an 'invasion,' a 'war of aggression' … launched and controlled from Hanoi." An accurate history would, however, show that "the struggle in Vietnam was no more a 'civil war' than it is a war of aggression from 'the North.'" When the French occupied Vietnam, "a number of Vietnamese supported the French and acted as their agents," but the resistance against French colonialism "was never considered a 'civil war.'" When the resistance against the French resumed after the Second World War, "it was never termed 'a civil war.'" And when the United States replaced the French, the nature of the war did not change. The presence in Vietnam of "a local, U.S. supported, U.S. supplied, U.S. financed, U.S. armed regime cannot obscure the central fact" that it is "essentially a war by the Vietnamese people against the military invasion of their country by the United States."[3]

The Tonkin Gulf Incident and Subsequent Resolution

The official story of the Gulf of Tonkin incident on August 4, 1964, is that North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked U.S. destroyers on routine patrol in international waters. President Johnson ordered retaliatory bombing raids on North Vietnam; and he asked Congress for a resolution that would grant him, as president, the power to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against U.S. forces and prevent further aggression. This "incident" was used to change the nature of American involvement in Vietnam, and set the stage for the major escalation of the war in early 1965.

According to Gabriel Kolko, "It was known—and immediately documented in *Le Monde*—that the United States had been sending espionage missions to the north since 1957 … and that on July 30 [1964] South Vietnamese and U.S. ships raided and bombarded DRV islands." At a press conference on the day after the alleged attack, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was asked about the attacks: "I can't explain them. They were unprovoked … our vessels were clearly in international waters …

roughly 60 miles off the North Vietnamese coast." Later Senate testimony, however, established the fact that the U.S. warships were not sixty miles out at sea, but three to eleven miles off the North's coast. Like many other countries, it "claimed a twelve-mile territorial limit."[4]

McNamara and other administration officials lied when asked if the United States had done anything to provoke an attack. "The attacks," McNamara claimed, "were 'deliberate and unprovoked' against a ship on 'routine patrol in international waters.'" When the possibility of a connection between the U.S. destroyer *Maddox* and the South Vietnamese commando raids was raised, McNamara lied again when he stated, "Our Navy played absolutely no part in, was not associated with, was not aware of any South Vietnamese actions, if there were any."[5] In a war filled with lies, this is one of the biggest.

In his book about his years in the CIA Ralph McGehee discusses the context and lies that were essential parts of the Tonkin Gulf incident. In early 1964 President Johnson's national security advisers felt that "something was needed to overcome the U.S. public's apathy toward the war." To this end, the U.S. Navy engaged in a series of provocations; these included an attack on a North Vietnamese island by U.S.-supported South Vietnamese forces, bombing and strafing North Vietnamese villages on that island, and feigned actions by the destroyer *Maddox*. North Vietnamese patrol boats reacted to the *Maddox*'s provocation, engaging the destroyer, which they believed was part of the earlier South Vietnamese attack. Finally, on August 4, 1964, the *Maddox* returned with another destroyer, and North Vietnamese patrol boats allegedly attacked the two ships; it was later proven that the engagement never happened. Three days later, Congress reacted to this non-incident and passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution with only two dissenting votes, as a show of support against this "attack on our sovereignty."[6]

Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman, Democrat J. William Fulbright, openly regretted the role that he, his committee, and Congress played in the aftermath of the Tonkin Gulf incident. When senators asked questions about the escalating war, they had the "blank check of August 7, 1964, waved in [their] faces as supposed evidence of the overwhelming support of the Congress for a policy in Southeast Asia." Fulbright said that if the Senate had carefully examined Johnson's request and had held

hearings before supporting it, and then "investigated carefully and thoroughly the alleged unprovoked attacks on our ships," it might have caused the committee and the Senate to "put limits and qualifications on our endorsement of future uses of force in Southeast Asia."[7]

George Kahin writes that in 1968, four years after the Tonkin Gulf, "under intensive questioning by Senators," McNamara could not provide a credible response to documented evidence that one of the attacks on U.S. ships "came directly on the heels" of a clandestine American operation. "The *Maddox* had been in the same general area, conducting … electronic espionage.… Thus, it could hardly be argued that the ship was on a patrol in international waters," as McNamara claimed. When senators challenged McNamara, he said he had "what he termed 'unimpeachable evidence' that there had been a second attack … which he now refused to release to the committee because of its high security classification."[8]

In 2005, that "unimpeachable" evidence emerged when the National Security Agency (NSA) released hundreds of pages of secret documents proving that no North Vietnamese attack had actually taken place. Yet millions were killed, maimed, and made refugees on the basis of claims that it had happened.

According to historian Mark Lawrence, Tonkin helped Johnson's political interests in a number of ways. The bombing of North Vietnam "produced a 30-point surge in his approval ratings. Even better for Johnson, the episode neutralized Vietnam as a campaign issue."[9] This surge in approval reflects a classic pattern in recent American history; when presidents need to show leadership and toughness, they attack some small country and their approval poll numbers go up. It must be recalled that the Tonkin incident occurred during the 1964 presidential race between Lyndon Johnson and the conservative Republican Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, who was pushing hard for an all-out war in Vietnam. Johnson had to look tough but not appear to be a warmonger, so he appeared "moderate" in contrast to Goldwater, who wanted to escalate the war—something Johnson himself did a few months after he was reelected.

In league with a compliant and passive Congress, not one "major American newspaper questioned either the official version of the events or the appropriateness of the American response," as Marilyn Young writes. The Tonkin incident was "presented to Congress and the public as an overt

act of hostility by Hanoi," exactly what Johnson's advisers "had told him he needed: a way to justify direct American participation in the war, a 'breakthrough into an irrevocable commitment.'"[10] The corporate media, fulfilling their essential role as cheerleaders for power in Washington, fell into line by passing on lies and distortions without a critical challenge.

Historian Fredrik Logevall rejects the official view that President Johnson had to escalate the war because of American "credibility," that he was forced to stand firm in Vietnam. Logevall agrees with allied leaders who thought that for both Kennedy and Johnson, especially the latter, Vietnam's "importance derived in large measure from its potential to threaten their own political standing—and [the Democratic] party's standing—at home." The notion of "credibility" was really centered in U.S. politics, in the "personal credibility of leading officials rather than the credibility of the United States."[11]

At no point during what Logevall calls the "Long 1964," the eighteen months from the summer of 1963 when Vietnam became a major issue for Kennedy through the late winter of 1965 when Johnson began bombing North Vietnam, were American leaders "hemmed in on Vietnam. They always had considerable freedom and possessed real choices. At home, they confronted not an all-powerful Cold War Consensus [but] little support for a large war." There was widespread opposition to escalation in Congress, and leading newspapers. It is a myth that Congress and the mainstream press in late 1964 to early 1965 "overwhelmingly favored a firm commitment to the defense of South Vietnam." Internationally as well, "the United States was largely isolated … by the end of 1964. The key allies opposed escalation and refused strong U.S. pressure to take part in it."[12]

There were a "large number of voices who understood already in 1964 the essential futility of what the United States was trying to do in South Vietnam and who believed that Vietnam was in any case not crucial to American or Western security." Despite these misgivings and opposition to escalation, many of those who pushed for a political solution rather than a deeper war "failed to challenge the administration … directly." Objections to Vietnam policy expressed in private meetings with the president were followed by public affirmations of total support for a policy they knew was futile.[13]

Influential political officials who might have prevented a war that eventually killed nearly four million people and devastated Vietnam abdicated their public responsibilities. Opposing official policy would not have involved any great risk except to their own careers, since their private concerns were supported by the American people, as polls in early 1965 "revealed widespread antipathy for the introduction of U.S. ground troops into the conflict, and broad support for some form of negotiations. More than that, surveys revealed a willingness on the part of lawmakers and their constituents to follow the administration's lead on the war, whichever way it chose to go."[14]

Kennedy and Johnson were so concerned with dissent toward their Vietnam policy that they engaged in "extensive efforts … to pressure these critics to change their position or at least keep their objections silent." Logevall concludes, "Many of those who foresaw a great calamity ahead should escalation occur failed to work hard to keep it from happening." This condemnation especially applies to Undersecretary of State George Ball, the most vocal inside dissenter on official policy in Vietnam, who "put loyalty to Johnson above principle; his hatred for the war was outweighed by his desire to stay on the team."[15] Ball, along with others like Senator Mike Mansfield, a Montana Democrat, ended up backing Johnson on the war, whatever the policy. They exemplified the cowardice of liberal critics during the war.

Novelist and journalist Mary McCarthy criticizes these "dissenters" and "doves" who were part of "the 'respectable oppositions,' but for whom 'unilateral withdrawal has become steadily more unthinkable as U.S. intervention had widened.'" Influential officials such as George Kennan, the former State Department representative who helped develop post–Second World War foreign policy, Senator Fulbright, and liberal senator Frank Church, Idaho Democrat, "all retained a sympathy for American power." However, McCarthy argues, "the more they talked, the clearer it became at some level they did not really oppose the war."[16] They continued to question the tactics and efficiency of U.S. policy, but not the premises of the war itself or the Noble Cause principle.

The massive and sustained bombing of North Vietnam beginning in February 1965 was one of the key elements of the U.S. escalation, but secret and illegal military attacks against North Vietnam that began under

Kennedy continued with Johnson. These included kidnapping North Vietnamese citizens, spy flights, commando raids targeted to hit rail and highway bridges, parachuting of psychological-warfare and sabotage teams into North Vietnam, and shelling of the North's coastal installations by PT boats. The public and Congress were not informed about these attacks.

In 1968, author and documentary journalist Michael Maclear exposed the lie about the so-called surgical Rolling Thunder bombing campaign begun under Johnson. During a U.S. bombing pause in Vinh Linh, North Vietnam, "70,000 people emerged from their underground city for their first full day of sun in three and a half years." The bombing raids "had totally destroyed urban life, or anything of brick and mortar, in the provinces below Hanoi." Essentially and brutally, "urban civilization had been erased" for about 30 percent of North Vietnam's population. This was the reality, not the official propaganda about precision bombing aimed to avoid civilian targets. European journalists and academics had "provided firsthand accounts" of the destruction, but these were dismissed "as partisan left-wing reports" by the U.S. media that "gave Washington the benefit of the doubt by largely ignoring these reports."[17] The left-wing reports were true.

Gabriel Kolko condemns the U.S. destruction of Vietnam as "the greatest flood of firepower against a nation known to history. The human suffering was monumental." In South Vietnam, the most conservative estimates reported that half of the peasants were forced "into refugee camps or urban settlements one or more times, many repeatedly.… The result was the urbanization of a rural society in a manner unique in [the twentieth] century, for it was far more brutal and disorienting to the population than any that a large Third World nation has ever experienced."[18]

In *Kill Anything that Moves*, historian Nick Turse lists some of the staggering means of violence used against the Vietnamese:

> The American forces came blazing in with fighter jets and helicopter gunships. They shook the earth with howitzers and mortars [and] they rolled over the landscape in heavy tanks, light tanks, and flame-throwers.… They had armored personnel cars for the roads and fields, swift boats for rivers, and battleships and aircraft carriers off shore. The Americans unleashed millions of gallons of chemical defoliants, millions of pounds of chemical gases, and endless canisters of napalm; cluster bombs, high-explosive shells, and daisy-cutter bombs …; antipersonnel rockets, high-explosive rockets, incendiary rockets, grenades by the mills, and myriad different kinds of mines.… In other words, in Vietnam the American military amassed an arsenal unlike any seen before.… The United States had at its disposal

> more killing power, destructive force, and advanced technology than any military in the history of the world. Notably, many of the weapons that Americans brought to Vietnam were designed specifically to maim and incapacitate people, on the theory that horribly wounded people sapped enemy resources even more than outright killing.[19]

Evidently the staggering arsenal that Turse lists above was part of "the advances in technology" that the Vietnam Commemoration Commission highlighted in its call to the American people (see Introduction, page 1). Most of the munitions used by the United States were in and over South Vietnam, as it was subjected to "the most lopsided air war ever fought. The guerrillas of South Vietnam had no airpower [and] the United States carried out the most intense bombing campaign in history." The most devastated area in South Vietnam was Quang Tri, where all but eleven of the province's 3,500 villages were bombed. Arthur Westing, the foremost expert on the ecological destruction of the American war in Vietnam, states: "Despite a year of frontline combat experience in Korea, and despite three previous trips to Indochina to study the war zones … I was unprepared for the utter devastation that confronted us.… As far as we could determine not a single permanent building, urban or rural, remained intact: no private dwellings, no schools, no libraries, no churches or pagodas, and no hospitals."[20]

Even the prominent French historian Bernard Fall came to see the U.S. assault on rural Vietnam as threatening the very survival of that country. Fall had originally supported French colonialism as well as early American intervention on behalf of Diem. According to historian Christopher Goscha, Fall was a cold warrior who believed that China and North Vietnam were threats to the "Free World"; his views on Vietnam had been shaped by his belief in the domino theory and support for an independent non-Communist South Vietnam. Although he had at first supported the Diem regime, he became increasingly critical of its harsh policies. Later, he became especially critical of U.S. tactics in the war, particularly its bombing campaign in South Vietnam.[21]

As the United States escalated the war, Fall believed that Washington was "repeating mistakes made by the French and that [its] spin doctors had created … a 'false reality' that misinterpreted the facts or, worse, 'deliberately' dismissed them as irrelevant to the problem." In mid-1965, after going on a U.S. bombing mission, Fall condemned the ruthless use of

American firepower. He was “shocked by the … unprecedented violence the air war was wreaking on the civil population,” a campaign that was killing innocent villagers.[22]

Agent Orange and Chemical Warfare

Adding to the death and devastation listed above was the chemical warfare that commenced in 1962, when the United States began using herbicides in South Vietnam. The program had two parts: the *defoliation* effort under Operation Ranch Hand in which planes sprayed forests, roadsides, and areas around U.S. bases to remove the foliage cover that concealed the NLF guerrillas; and the destruction of rice crops to deny food to these fighters. The great mangrove forests of Vietnam were also severely damaged from defoliation—with about half totally destroyed.[23]

Reporter Seymour Hersh writes that it was not until December 1965 that Americans “first learned that U.S. planes were deliberately using defoliants and herbicides to destroy rice and other crops in South Vietnam.” The first official U.S. confirmation that “the defoliation program was aimed, at least in part, at food-producing areas came in March 1966, when the State Department announced that about 20,000 acres in South Vietnam … had been destroyed.” Hersh quotes a July 1966 *New York Times* dispatch that reported that “the spraying of enemy crops was being stepped up,” admitting that the program, begun four years earlier in 1962, had “blighted about 130,000 acres of rice and other food plants.”[24]

President Kennedy approved a recommendation by the State Department and the Pentagon to begin this “large-scale herbicide/chemical warfare program. Both departments advised the use of herbicides for defoliation only, apparently recognizing that the destruction of enemy crops was a clear violation of international law and a war crime, and were therefore unwilling to explicitly endorse such a program.” This did not stop Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon from continuing it; attempts by a few members of Congress to defund the program failed by a wide margin. From July 1966 to July 1973, Congress voted one hundred times to fund the war, and never once voted to curtail or deny spending for the program. A secret 1967 report titled “Operation Pink Rose” revealed that the defoliation program was “not only used to destroy Vietnam’s jungles and mangrove

forests, but also to kill off row crops, particularly rice." The report was not made public until 1988.[25]

According to Nick Turse, the U.S. defoliation campaign "brought hunger and privation and caused a rupture in the fabric of rural civic life.… Lush green paddy fields where rice was cultivated—the very center of Vietnamese rural life—were deliberately targeted, in many cases severing an almost sacred connection that bound the Vietnamese to their land." By 1965, nearly half of all chemical defoliants sprayed in South Vietnam "were aimed at food crops, and the country quickly went from rice exporter to rice importer." American war planners expected that the crop destruction would aid the pacification program that was created in 1967, and included military and civilian components of both the U.S. and Saigon regime; its objective was to gain support for the regime from rural peasants who often supported the NLF. The program would do this by driving villagers "out of areas of the countryside controlled by the NLF and into those controlled by the Saigon regime. Many peasants, however, remained in their ancestral hamlets, even as children grew rail-thin and their parents became increasingly desperate."[26]

When writer Fred Wilcox traveled to Vietnam in 2011 to research his book *Scorched Earth* on chemical warfare in Vietnam, he heard many personal stories about its destructive effects. Some said that "they felt faint, bled from the nose and mouth, vomited, suffered from numbness in their hands and feet, and experienced migraine-like headaches." Their farm animals were also affected, as "they grew weak, got sick, and even died after being exposed to defoliants." As the use of Agent Orange grew during the war, Saigon regime newspapers risked being shut down if they published stories about "babies born with heads shaped like mice, pigs and sheep, about two-headed babies." Those whose families "had lived on the same land for generations said they'd never encountered such strange phenomena," and medical personnel "who delivered these babies could not recall having seen similar birth defects before the American war."[27]

After years of attempting to get the U.S. government to address the ailments and concerns about Agent Orange, in 2007 the Vietnamese filed a lawsuit against the chemical companies that had gained enormous profits from the sufferings of millions of people. At the time, the U.S. ambassador to Vietnam, former USAF pilot Pete Peterson who flew bombing missions

over North Vietnam and was shot down and imprisoned, dismissed the Vietnamese effort as “mere propaganda.” A federal court judge dismissed the Vietnamese case, stating that the Agent Orange program “did not constitute ‘willful killing’ or ‘willfully causing great suffering or serious injury in body or health’ since the United States lacked the required criminal intent.” He concluded that the United States “did not use herbicides in Vietnam with the specific intent to destroy any group.” In early 2009, the Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal.[28]

Wilcox states that some three million Vietnamese, including 500,000 children, continue to suffer from the effects of the toxic chemicals sprayed during the war. By the time defoliation spraying ended in 1971, it had destroyed some 4.5 million acres of the rural countryside in what was then South Vietnam. “You will find these children in hospitals, community-run centers, and poor rural homes. You will be surprised, then amazed, then shocked by the abundance of Agent Orange children.” In 2010, Vietnam veteran George Mizo, his wife, Rosi Hohn-Mizo, and George Doussin of France were awarded Vietnam’s first ever State Medal of Friendship in recognition of their efforts to plan and create Friendship Village in Vietnam, part of their work on behalf of children affected by Agent Orange.[29]

For historian Edwin Martini, Agent Orange “has consistently provided far more questions than answers. Despite decades of study, questions of exposure, causality, compensation, and justice remain at the forefront of scientific, legal, political, and diplomatic debates over the legacies of the chemical war.” When he began his research, Martini assumed it “was responsible for all the horrific birth defects [that] accompany news stories about its use in Vietnam.” But he would discover that “the science on the relationship between dioxin and birth defects, as well as a host of other conditions, is very much divided and inconclusive.” He also “assumed that the military and perhaps even the policymakers knew about the dangers of Agent Orange in the early 1960s but ignored them in choosing to weaponize the herbicides, only to find out that no historical evidence supports such a claim.”[30]

Martini argues that U.S. officials “made more than their share of deadly mistakes, and Ranch Hand is certainly one of the biggest and most momentous. But that does not mean they were evil men out to do evil deeds.” They did inflict “devastating damage on Vietnam and … tens of

thousands of American soldiers in the process," and showed "a wanton disregard for human life." Regarding the use of Agent Orange, "in the final analysis, the language of chemical warfare and war crimes is a matter of international law."[31]

Martini also disagrees with those who link the Agent Orange program "to the evils of American imperialism. For those who became disillusioned about their government during the Vietnam War, Agent Orange has served as a screen onto which they can project their feelings." Accusations by Arthur Galston, Arthur Westing, Fred Wilcox and others, however, are not based on "feelings" but on careful study and documented evidence. Martini agrees, however, that there is "no excuse for what the United States did to the Vietnamese people during the war, including experimenting with herbicidal warfare." He does not attempt to "whitewash history or turn the war into the supposed noble cause championed in retrospect by many politicians and revisionist historians"; rather, his history tries to "see the decisions from the standpoint of those who made them fifty years or more."[32] In the matter of the American War in Vietnam, however, the subjective feelings of the actors who believed they were doing "the right thing" are ultimately irrelevant. It's the murderous evidence that counts.

According to writer George Black, the most authoritative estimate of the scale of the chemical warfare program comes from a 2003 study by Jeanne Stellman, a professor emerita at Columbia University's School of Public Health. Reviewing actual USAF flight records and a geographic information system, Stellman "calculated that between 1961 and 1971 about 20 million gallons of herbicides were dropped on South Vietnam, exposing as many as 4.8 million people to the toxic chemicals." Monsanto and Dow Chemical Corporation, the largest producers of the poisonous toxin, "insisted the stuff was safe, as did the military. Psywar teams were routinely sent into villages after a spraying run to deliver the message … that [they] have no harmful effects of any kind on human or animal life.'"[33]

The South Vietnamese Military Regimes

Rule by military juntas in South Vietnam continued during the Johnson years. After Ngo Dinh Diem was overthrown and killed in early November 1963 by senior members of his own military who had been given the green

light for the coup by the White House (which did not expect Diem to be murdered), General Minh took control as head of a military junta. Minh in turn was quickly deposed because he "did not provide the solution that the Kennedy administration had confidently assumed would result from such a change." The real fear was that Minh might work out "a 'neutral' solution involving an end to the fight and a compromise agreement with the NLF. Such an agreement would, of course, have meant an end to the United States' military and political role in Vietnam." If the United States were removed, "no Saigon government could hope to resist popular pressure for an end to the fighting and negotiation of a compromise political settlement.… With that the whole rationale for U.S. intervention would, of course, collapse."[34]

By June 1965, the parade of military juntas ended in South Vietnam with the accession of Generals Thieu and Ky, who were kept in power by the United States until the regime collapsed ten years later and they fled with vast amounts of loot and money they had stolen over the years. Thieu, a Vietnamese collaborator trained by the French (as was his military colleague Ky), was from an affluent landlord family and had converted to Catholicism. These credentials helped him rise to power under Diem, whom Thieu then helped to overthrow. Kennedy and Johnson adviser William Bundy put the matter bluntly—but in private—when he stated that the two were "the bottom of the barrel, absolutely the bottom of the barrel."[35]

The Tet Offensive: 1968

The Tet (Vietnamese New Year) Offensive in late January 1968 resulted in coordinated attacks throughout South Vietnam, and shattered the illusion that the United States was winning the war. The Tet Offensive came as an almost total surprise to the Allied military command, as resistance forces attacked almost every major American base—and every town and city in South Vietnam—and some even entered Saigon itself. They moved into the most secure provincial capitals, and in many places they opened the jails and liberated the regime's political prisoners. The offensive had a strong impact upon American public opinion; "for the first time," writer Frances FitzGerald reported, major news magazines began to "criticize the war overtly."[36] This was a false criticism, however, confined to methods and

strategies; it did not challenge the political and moral ends of the American war or U.S. foreign policy in general.

The shock of Tet was greater in the United States because Robert Komer, former CIA operative and civilian director of the pacification program, and Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, previously told the public that "the enemy threat had receded." The United States had seemed to be "firmly in control. The fact that the American command had been unprepared for such a gross movement raised doubts about the quality of American intelligence and wisdom of American military strategy over the past two years." During an appearance at the National Press Club in late November 1967, General Westmoreland had said that "the enemy's [referring to the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese] hopes are bankrupt," their forces were "declining at a steady rate."[37]

Also that November, Johnson convened a meeting of the senior foreign policy advisory group—prominent men who had served in the government, known as "the Wise Men." He wanted support for his Vietnam policies and he got it from these powerful figures that gave him almost unanimous agreement against getting out. "Absolutely not," said Dean Acheson, former secretary of state. "As impossible as it is undesirable," said McGeorge Bundy, who was then Johnson's national security advisor. "Definitely not," stated C. Douglas Dillon, former secretary of the treasury. "Unthinkable," said Henry Cabot Lodge, ambassador to South Vietnam under Kennedy. "The public would be outraged if we got out," said Abe Fortas, Supreme Court justice.[38]

A little more than two months later, the Tet Offensive ended these tough and supportive views and Westmoreland's confident predictions. The U.S. destruction of Vietnam had no bearing on this shift: the war simply was not working out as planned. Americans were shocked by Tet because they had bought Westmoreland's and the administration's previous positive predictions on its progress. Their shock grew when influential CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite, an early and longtime supporter of the war, stated: "What the hell's going on? I thought we were winning." It was not the carnage that brought the shock, however, but the mounting losses for Americans. The Vietnamese death toll did not matter. But despite critics' claims that the Tet Offensive caused a dramatic change in public opinion, historian Mark Lawrence points out that it "produced no dramatic plunge in

public support for the war. Polls showed only a continuation of the gradual decline of support that had begun a year earlier." A number of U.S. military officials shared the media's bleak view of the war, including Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson: "We suffered a loss, there can be no doubt about it."[39]

After these stunning military attacks during Tet, Johnson asked for a review of American policy and tactics, and appointed Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford to lead the group, the Clifford Committee. It included McNamara, who had resigned that office, and other high-ranking officials. The group rejected the Joint Chiefs' calls for more bombing and gave Johnson more of the same advice: hold to the strategy with a possibility of negotiations. He was not pleased, however, and called for another review, by a "Senior Informal Advisory Group" that included public officials and military who had served three presidents. Eight of the nine men had been prominent supporters of the war with Undersecretary of State George Ball as a "critic" or "dissenter." His criticism, however, consisted of private laments about the war at closed meetings followed by complete public support for U.S. policy. This senior advisory group concluded that continued escalation of the war was not working, and that the United States had to seek a political solution to the conflict.

On March 25, 1968, came another meeting with the "Wise Men," the elder statesmen who had been advising and supporting the war. McGeorge Bundy summarized their view for the president: "We can no longer do the job we set out to do in the time we have left [the last year of Johnson's presidency], and we must begin to take steps to disengage."[40] Six days later, Johnson announced a bombing pause over North Vietnam, and told the nation he would not run for reelection that fall. Powerful governmental officials and advisers had decided that the slaughter was not working and U.S. losses had to be cut. The millions who had been killed and wounded, Vietnamese and Americans, were invisible in these deliberations. This was *after* Tet when it was clear the United States was not going to win the war.

This is not how things looked from the point of view of Wilfred Burchett, the Australian journalist who had been behind the lines with the NLF for years. Writing in the *National Guardian* (New York) in late December 1967, Burchett claimed that the NLF had taken the initiative in the war, had begun a major offensive, and was "now able to mount

simultaneous attacks on vastly separate objectives in divisional strength." In late January 1968, his uncanny prediction came to be. He stated: "The true facts about the war have been denied the U.S. public by the extraordinary antics of General William Westmoreland and his public relations team in Saigon." According to H. Bruce Franklin, the Tet Offensive allowed the NLF and North Vietnamese Army to expose "the official U.S. version of reality as a flimflam of illusions and lies." At this point in the history of the war, "the military picture painted by the establishment media had now become almost indistinguishable from that found in the alternative press." As the *Wall Street Journal* editorialized in February 1968: "We think the American people should be getting ready to accept, if they haven't already, the prospect that the whole Vietnam effort may be doomed; it may be falling apart at our feet."[41]

Gabriel Kolko analyzes what happened after Tet, writing that there must be a "consensus on the role and goals of U.S. power and on the nature of the world … for being part of the decisionmaking process." This principle dominates because "the 'best and brightest' are ultimate team players." When it came to the American war and Tet, therefore, powerful "sectors of the financial and business community, normally in favor of, or, at most, indifferent toward expansion [of the war], were compelled to see the economic priorities the war was now generating, and pragmatically began to oppose such a high-cost, protracted contest." For this group, "the war had long ceased to be limited for purposes of U.S. power worldwide and had begun seriously to erode its economic, military, and political foundations.… Most important, the war's effects helped erode the essential prerequisite of the United States' role in the world order: the internal political consensus for American globalism."[42]

Kolko claims that Tet's "most decisive effect was to articulate clearly the fact that the United States was now confronting a potentially grave crisis. The first three months of 1968 were therefore the most important in the history of the entire American aggression in Vietnam." Powerful and influential men "with close links to the worlds of finance, corporate law, and big business" had "strongly supported the President's policy" in the fall of 1967. After Tet, however, they changed their view and told the President that "the war could not be won and the United States had to change its policy."[43]

Noam Chomsky also asserts that Tet caused a dramatic political shift in the U.S. ideological system: “Virtually everyone suddenly turned out to have been an ‘early opponent of the war’—in secret, since no record can be found.” The Tet Offensive was a “turning point for the cultural managers, who now faced several challenging tasks. One was to defuse the opposition.… Another was to restore the basic doctrines of the faith: The war must now be understood as a noble effort gone astray.”[44]

The Hue Massacre

Stories appeared years later in the mainstream media about the Hue massacre that occurred during the Tet Offensive in early February 1968. The official story that emerged in November 1969 was that “the bodies of more than 3,000 Hue residents were found in mass graves outside the city,” having been executed by NLF and North Vietnamese forces. Economist and foreign policy scholar Edward S. Herman and historian Gareth Porter challenge the official story, asserting that “like so much else which concerns the history of the Vietnam War, this widely accepted ‘fact’ is a myth, originated by officials of the Saigon and U.S. governments, using phony documentation and plain lies.” They claim that the massacre “has never been seriously questioned or investigated by the press.”[45]

The official story, claiming that NLF and North Vietnamese forces had “deliberately, according to an advance plan and ‘blacklist,’ rounded up and murdered thousands of civilians,” essentially relied on a “captured document” that was released by the U.S. mission in Saigon in November 1969. This was twenty-one months after the massacre allegedly took place and about the same time that the U.S. public learned of the My Lai massacre—whose truth is indisputable. What a fortuitous coincidence. The primary source of information for the Hue executions was the Saigon Army’s Tenth Political Warfare Battalion, a suspect source given “its past role in the forgery of documents and implementation of major propaganda campaigns around the theme of alleged Communist massacres.” This suspect source reported that mass executions had been carried out and that “nearly half of the victims had been buried alive.… The story was never questioned, despite the fact that no Western journalist had ever been taken to see the grave sites when the bodies were uncovered.”[46]

The captured document met the “needs of the moment—My Lai had broken and organized peace activity in the fall of 1969 was intense.” In addition to the “captured document,” information supporting the massacre reportedly came from the discovery of mass graves. There’s a problem with this “evidence,” however, because it has been established that many civilians “were killed in the U.S.-Saigon recapture of Hue by the massive and indiscriminate use of firepower.” The NLF stated that its forces buried many victims of this counterattack; and many dead civilians “were bull-dozed into mass graves by returning U.S. and Saigon forces.” According to Nick Turse, once Hue was recaptured by U.S. and South Vietnamese forces, “‘black teams’ of South Vietnamese assassins moved in, reportedly torturing and ‘disappearing’ those accused of collaborating with the revolutionary forces, including women and children.”[47]

Since the My Lai massacre became known in the United States around the same time, the Hue massacre “was *needed* to help convince us that even if we were not quite as kindly toward the Vietnamese” as the propaganda would have the public believe, “*they* were worse.” The usual treatment of “allied atrocities was the mass media’s suppression of the sensational revelations of thousands of murders of South Vietnamese civilians by our South Korean mercenaries,” which was and is to this day virtually unknown here. Although there is no doubt that many South Vietnamese civilians were killed during the siege of Hue, Herman and Porter argue that “the vast majority” of them were killed as a result of fighting in the city, especially [from] the stupendous use of firepower by the U.S. in recapturing the city.” Journalist Robert Shaplen states: “Nothing I had seen during the Second World War … during the Korean War, and in Vietnam during the Indochina War or since 1965 was as terrible … as what I had witnessed.… *Nearly four thousand civilians were killed in Hue… and most of them were the victims of American air and artillery attacks.”*[48]

Herman and Porter agree that the NLF and North Vietnam troops “killed some civilians during their occupation, but there is no evidence that they executed large numbers. In the massive carnage of the Vietnam War generally, and the battle of Hue in particular, the term ‘massacre’ applied to [the killing] of civilians at Hue is simply a deceptive propaganda ploy.” The media’s willingness “to swallow and institutionalize the myth of the Hue

massacre reflects [their] real role in a political and social system adjusted to cold war conflict."[49]

During a trip to Vietnam in the 1990s, Marine veteran and poet W. D. Ehrhart met with Nguyen Dac Xuan, a Vietnamese journalist who worked with the NLF and helped guide North Vietnamese troops into Hue during the Tet Offensive:

> I asked him about the so-called Hue massacre.… "You were here. You saw what happened. People could not protect themselves, and they got killed." Then he tells me that several hundred people were arrested in the early days of the fighting, but that all of them had direct ties to the [Saigon regime]. They were to have been taken west to the mountain strongholds, but the Americans closed the escape routes faster than the VC had anticipated. Cut off and unable to obtain new orders, the guards chose to kill their prisoners and escape individually or in small groups. "Perhaps they should not have killed those people," he says, "But consider what the French did to those who collaborated with the Nazis."[50]

The My Lai Massacre

The official and mainstream media stories on the Hue massacre served a vital purpose: they diverted attention away from actual U.S. violence in Vietnam. This included the most infamous and publicized massacre of the war in the hamlet of My Lai on March 16, 1968, within the village of Son My; it was part of a larger and systemic pattern of terrorism aimed at the rural peasantry who supported the NLF-led resistance against the Saigon regime and the United States. That same morning another massacre took place in the nearby hamlet of My Khe—to this day virtually unknown to the U.S. public. The My Lai and My Khe massacres resulted in the murders of 504 unarmed Vietnamese civilians; most of the victims were women, children, and infants. Although twenty-six soldiers were charged with criminal offenses, only Lieutenant William Calley Jr. was convicted, having been found guilty of killing twenty-two villagers by an Army court-martial and given a life sentence with hard labor. President Nixon intervened in the case, however, and Calley served only three and a half years under house arrest, and was then pardoned. The official Vietnam Commemoration website refers to the massacre as the My Lai "Incident."

The attack on My Lai occurred even though there were no NLF troops in the area; the official Army investigation concluded that there was no resistance at any time during the massacre. U.S. soldiers "killed everyone

they encountered, from the very young to the very old.… Some of the GIs raped or gang-raped women and girls, sexually mutilated several of the victims, and mutilated other corpses." The soldiers also "burned the houses by lighting their hatched roofs. They planted dynamite and other explosives to destroy brick buildings and threw animals they had killed down wells in order to pollute the water supply." One of the My Lai survivors, Nguyen Bat, "was not a Communist at the time of the massacre," but it changed his mind. "After the shooting," he said, "everyone became Communists."[51]

Journalist Seymour Hersh broke the story in the national media in the fall of 1969. Calley ordered his men to push civilians in a ditch and began shooting them, and called for his men to do the same. A particularly chilling moment "stood out for the GIs involved: Very shortly after the shooting stopped, a bloodied but unhurt two-year-old boy miraculously crawled out of the ditch, crying. He began running toward the hamlet. Someone hollered, 'There's a kid.' There was a long pause. Then Calley ran back, grabbed the child, threw him back in the ditch and shot him."[52]

Hersh returned to My Lai in December 2014 and filed a story in *The New Yorker*. He visited the My Lai Museum, and witnessed the gruesome details of what happened there and also in the nearby hamlet of My Khe:

> The museum's count, no longer in dispute, is five hundred and four victims, from two hundred and forty-seven families. Twenty-four families obliterated—three generations murdered, with no survivors. Among the dead were a hundred and eighty-two women, seventeen of them pregnant. A hundred and seventy-three children were executed, including fifty-six infants. Sixty older men died. The museum's accounting included another important fact: the victims of the massacre that day were not only in My Lai (also known as My Lai 4).… [My Khe], a mile or so to the east … was assaulted by another contingent of U.S. soldiers.… The museum lists four hundred and seven victims in My Lai 4 and ninety-seven in My Khe 4. The message was clear: what happened in My Lai 4 was not singular, not an aberration; it was replicated, in lesser numbers. [53]

Flying above My Lai that March morning in an observation helicopter was Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson Jr., with his door-gunners Glenn Andreotta and Lawrence Colburn. Thompson could see that that "the soldiers intended to murder the Vietnamese," so he set down his helicopter between the troops and the villagers. "Before climbing out of his aircraft, Thompson ordered Colburn and his crew to stay alert." Colburn stated, "'He told us that if any of the Americans opened up on the Vietnamese, we

should open up on the Americans.’”[54] Thompson and his crew saved a number of Vietnamese from sure death at the hands of Calley and his men.

The first official military report from U.S. Americal Division, however, “found no evidence of excessive civilian deaths.” It claimed that “the civilian casualties had resulted from crossfire between the [NLF] defenders of the village and the American soldiers,” a monstrous lie since there were no NLF forces in My Lai and no one fired on American soldiers. According to the official Peers Commission inquiry, led by Lieutenant General William R. Peers who was appointed by the secretary of the army and the army chiefs of staff to conduct a thorough review of the My Lai massacre and how it was investigated by the Army, this first report started a process that included the disappearance of records and “a pattern of deliberate suppression or withholding of information … at every command level from company to division.”[55]

In 1998, at a ceremony at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, Thompson, Andreotta, and Colburn were finally honored for their heroism with the Soldier’s Medal (Andreotta posthumously), the U.S. Army’s highest award for bravery that does not involve direct contact with enemy forces. That same year, Thompson and Colburn returned to My Lai to meet with some villagers they had rescued. They also dedicated a new elementary school for the children of the village.[56] (The Army cover-up and official inquiry, White House response, and U.S. media and public reaction to the My Lai massacre will be examined in chapter 5.)

The Phoenix Program

The CIA established the Phoenix Program in South Vietnam in 1967, a plan to identify and destroy the organizational and support network of the NLF in South Vietnam. It led to tens of thousands of deaths, injuries, and disappearances, The program operated in the same time period as the My Lai and My Khe massacres, and continued during the Nixon administration until 1972. In congressional testimony about the program, two former U.S. military intelligence agents verified the use of torture in the program as a method of “persuasion.” They testified that Vietnamese “were indiscriminately rounded up, tortured, and murdered in the effort to eliminate” NLF officials.[57]

Douglas Valentine, author of a major work on this CIA-directed Phoenix criminal enterprise, puts the number killed at more than 25,000; the essence of the program "is … that it targeted civilians, not soldiers." Under Phoenix, there was no due process, as "civilians whose names appeared on CIA blacklists were kidnapped, tortured, detained without trial, or murdered on the word of an informer." Since Phoenix assassinations "were often conducted at night while its victims were home sleeping," its aim was "counter-terror … in which enemy agents were brutally murdered along with their families and neighbors as a means of terrorizing the people into a state of submission. Such horrendous acts were … often made to look as if they had been committed by the enemy."[58] Another former Army intelligence agent testified that he "never knew an individual to be detained as [an NLF] suspect who ever lived through an interrogation in a year and a half, and that included quite a number of individuals."[59]

Felix Greene stresses the immense suffering caused by U.S. actions. "The evidence is overwhelming and undeniable," he states. "No one even attempts to deny it. Torture, the shooting of prisoners, the use of napalm and phosphorus against civilians, the burning of defenseless villages—all these are now matters of public record." Since the U.S. government signed the 1949 Geneva Convention governing the treatment of prisoners, all of this violated international law.[60]

The Noble Cause for "freedom and democracy" in Vietnam would continue during the Nixon administration, with added carnage and not a moment's consideration for the Vietnamese victims.

5

President Nixon, “Vietnamization,” and the End of the War

The election of Richard Nixon in November 1968 brought no basic change to the war. He prolonged the violence with President Johnson’s “Vietnamization” program: withdrawing American ground troops and increasing the technical means of destruction while shifting combat responsibilities to the Thieu/Ky regime’s troops. It was “little more than a change of tactics—and a change that originated not with him but with President Johnson in the summer of 1968.… And it was the same strategy” that unfolded when the United States replaced the French in 1954.[1]

Nixon pursued this strategy to counter the rising antiwar movement, and pressured the Pentagon “to avoid costly ground engagements in order to reduce American casualty figures,” a strategy that some Washington officials called “firepower, not manpower.” He attempted to find a way to allow the United States to survive a long war without losing its Asian empire, while avoiding continued conflicts at home.[2]

In response to growing antiwar demonstrations, increased opposition inside the military, and a rapidly deteriorating political and military situation in South Vietnam, Nixon and his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, chose to intensity the air war rather than press for a political settlement. The intensified air and technological war was used to prolong the conflict and support the hugely unpopular and repressive Thieu regime. They did this by politically manipulating two key issues in the war for their own and Washington’s benefit: the My Lai massacre and POW/MIAs.

Historians Michael Hunt and Steven Levine write about Nixon’s attempt to produce an orderly American disengagement that preserved the Thieu regime. This policy “had been essential to U.S. efforts in Vietnam since the 1954 Geneva Agreements were signed—through four presidential

administrations." It was key "to beef up the South Vietnamese regime's armed forces.… A massive arms infusion made it one of the best-equipped armies in the world backed up by a substantial air force (the world's fourth largest by 1973). This buildup provided the justification for a steady U.S. troop pullout." Despite this massive infusion of arms and troops, the regime's forces collapsed like a house of cards some years later.[3]

Another key Nixon strategy was to pacify the home front. This meant he needed to buy some time in order to strengthen the Thieu/Ky regime in the South and "maneuver Hanoi into an acceptable deal.… The institution of a draft lottery in 1970 helped deflate the antiwar movement, especially on college campuses.… To frustrate the more determined opponents of the war," Nixon continued the Johnson policy of "waging a largely covert campaign against prominent critics," using the FBI, NSA, CIA, IRS, and military intelligence that "spied on, provoked, harassed, audited, entrapped, and slandered opponents." This long-term Nixon strategy through the January 1973 Peace Agreement led to the deaths of almost 500,000 NVA and NLF soldiers, as well as over 100,000 regime troops. "Americans had paid for four more years of fighting with the death of nearly 21,000 … and with the accentuation of already deep societal divisions and political bitterness."[4]

Nixon also helped to sabotage the Paris Peace talks that had begun in the spring of 1968 during the Johnson administration; he was aided by Henry Kissinger, who then became his national security advisor. Just prior to the November 1968 presidential election, it appeared there might be a ceasefire in Vietnam. Nixon intervened as a private citizen, violating U.S. law, by letting General Thieu know that he would get a better deal if Nixon became president. The recent release of additional presidential papers "now confirms this long-standing belief, usually dismissed as a 'conspiracy theory' by Republican conservatives," that he sabotaged efforts at a settlement. The conservative columnist George Will has recently confirmed this story.[5] Kissinger, who was working on behalf of President Johnson to foster peace talks, secretly passed on information to the Nixon campaign.

Nixon and the POW/MIA Issue

Nixon countered the growing antiwar movement by manipulating the POW/MIA issue. H. Bruce Franklin, in his important book on the POW/MIA myth—the powerful belief that the Vietnamese government held American prisoners long after the war ended in 1975, describes the utterly cynical orchestrated effort by Nixon and businessman Ross Perot, among others, to use the belief in this myth to prolong the shooting war. Then, after it ended in 1975, four presidents—Carter, Reagan, G. H. W Bush, and Clinton—engineered an economic/political attack against Vietnam that would last another twenty years until diplomatic relations were established. It was within the context of growing citizen concern and opposition to war and related issues such as the My Lai massacre that Nixon used American POWs and MIAs to his political advantage. The issue "would serve mainly as an indispensable device for continuing the war, functioning on the domestic front as a potent counterforce to the antiwar movement while providing an ingenious tool for building insurmountable roadblocks within the peace talks." The issue would then become "a major obstacle to normalized relations for more than [two decades] after the 1973 peace accords."[6]

Deeply held citizen beliefs about POWs and MIAs continued, even though the leading congressional supporter of the myth, conservative Democrat Representative "Sonny" Montgomery of Mississippi, was forced to admit that there was no evidence to confirm the claim that North Vietnam was holding POWs. In 1976, his House committee stated unequivocally in its final report that "no Americans are still being held alive as prisoners in Indochina, or elsewhere, as a result of the war in Indochina."[7] Yet, to this day, the POW/MIA flag still flies over public buildings across the United States.

Historian Michael J. Allen also addresses the POW/MIA issue, asserting that the public and leaders "were misled … fooled into fighting for prisoners who could only return when the war ended and for thousands more of the missing dead." Historical documentation reveals "how hard Nixon and his staff worked to mislead everyone on virtually every matter of public interest, including POWs and MIAs." Nixon was not the only powerful figure and force in this drama, however, and "hardly alone in his attempts to use POWs and MIAs to sway public opinion." His efforts to

manipulate this issue "muddied the politics and diplomacy of the … issue, but it did not unite Americans behind his continuation of the war."[8]

Nixon clearly used the plight of American POWs for political gains, "one of many attempts on the part of the incoming administration to seize the initiative in Vietnam and regain the moral high ground from the war's critics." Sympathy for the POWs and their families, however, "did not translate into universal support for Nixon or the war, as … its steadily declining support in the polls made clear."[9]

The late Jonathan Schell contrasted the plight of POWs with other U.S. soldiers in Vietnam: "The wounded, the dying, and the dead went virtually unnoticed," because "attention was focused on the prisoners of war." Citizens got in line behind Nixon's lead, and "began to speak as though the North Vietnamese had kidnapped four hundred Americans and the United States had gone to war to retrieve them. They became the objects of a virtual cult, and many people were persuaded that the United States was fighting to get its prisoners back."[10] This concern, however, was organized and orchestrated out of the White House; it did not represent a spontaneous movement arising from the grassroots. There was no massive outpouring of public concern for POWs during the Johnson administration. Why did it arise after Nixon became president? The visual symbol of this orchestrated and deeply cynical campaign remains with the POW/MIA flag that flies over the White House, as it has since 1982, and every post office in the country several times a year.

The concern for American POWs held in North Vietnam did not extend to the treatment of Vietnamese POWs at the hands of American-backed forces in the South. The U.S. Office of the Army Chief of Staff was forced to admit that the Thieu-Ky regime engaged in "cruel, sophisticated, calculated torture for information" that exposed as untrue the "hypocritical … pious statements about the treatment of POWs by the President." According to the *Far Eastern Review*, "Those released from U.S.-run jails in Saigon were all incurably crippled. Prolonged malnutrition had turned them into grotesque parodies of humanity." Some of the worst abuses occurred in Con Son prison, opened by the French in 1862, home of the infamous tiger cages. *Time* magazine reported that "having been forced into a permanent pretzel-like crouch, tiger cage survivors resembled grotesque

sculptures of scarred flesh and gnarled limbs.… They move like crabs, skittering across the floor on buttocks and palms."[11]

My Lai: Twenty Months Later

Revelations of the My Lai massacre heightened the deep divisions over the war at home, twenty months after it happened. When the massacre became public in late 1969, the U.S. Army created the Vietnam War Crimes Working Group, "a secret Pentagon task force that had been assembled … to ensure that the army would never again be caught off guard by a major war crimes scandal." The WCWG files included "more than 300 allegations of massacres, murders, rapes, tortures, assaults, mutilations, and other atrocities that were substantiated by army investigators." These files "alone demonstrate that atrocities were committed by members of every infantry, cavalry, and airborne division … that is, every major army unit in Vietnam."[12]

When Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor read a draft of the Peers Inquiry on the My Lai massacre, the official military investigation of what happened in that hamlet, he "immediately summoned Peers. He didn't want to contradict the report, he stressed, but the message was clear: tone things down." Pentagon officials were "dismayed that Peers had chronicled not only the slaughter at My Lai … but also the killings carried out on the same day in the nearby [hamlet] of My Khe." The Pentagon's strategy had to portray My Lai "as a one-off aberration, rather than part of a consistent pattern of criminality resulting from the politics set at the top." When asked about My Khe, therefore, Peers "sidestepped the question, and Pentagon briefers simply lied, stating that the massacre had been perpetrated by South Vietnamese troops."[13]

Secretary Resor also urged General Peers to describe "the Vietnamese who had been killed as 'noncombatant casualties' rather than as women, children, babies, and old men." Major General Winant Sidle, the army's chief of information, "insisted that Peers not use the word *massacre*. At the press conference Peers replaced the word *massacre* with the phrase 'tragedy of major proportions.'" When the "severely abridged version" of the Peers inquiry report was issued two years after the actual massacres, in March 1970, it "excluded references to the massacre at My Khe," thus allowing the

Army, from Secretary Resor on down, “to recite the lie” that the My Lai massacre “was an isolated event.”[14]

Were it not for Army veteran Ronald Ridenhour, the public would never have known about My Lai. He had heard eyewitness accounts during his tour in Vietnam and decided to do something when he returned home. People urged him not to report it, “not to turn in his buddies, not to help the enemy.” Ridenhour sent letters of concern about the massacre to Nixon, key Democratic senators, congressional representatives, chaplains, and the Pentagon; many stated that they never received his letter. Only two representatives took an interest in the matter, and in April 1970, General Westmoreland “turned over the case to the office of the Inspector General … and directed it to make a full-scale inquiry.”[15]

The Official U.S. Response

When the My Lai story broke in late 1969, thanks to the persistent efforts of Ridenhour and reporter Seymour Hersh, the Nixon administration organized a campaign to divert attention from the massacre and Calley’s subsequent indictment. It orchestrated media and public responses, and attempted to smear Ridenhour and Hersh. Nixon worked out an elaborate plan to counter the negative news and growing public concern about what had happened, and to discredit the antiwar movement. The plan also included “a secret demand” to investigate Ridenhour.

Nixon was especially outraged at the critical letter he received from the Army prosecutor in the Calley case, Captain Aubrey Daniel, who “forcefully defended the fairness of the trial and the justice of the … verdict and asserted that he would have expected the White House to have done the same.” Instead, Nixon had intervened in the case out of political motives, “in a manner that ‘damaged the military judicial system and lessened any respect it may have gained as a result of these proceedings.’” Nixon called Daniels a “little jerk captain.”[16]

Authors and documentary filmmakers Michael Bilton and Kevin Sim write that although Calley “was by no means the only one responsible for the massacre at My Lai … he was the only man ever found guilty of any offense committed there.” He was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor in 1971; however, three days later Nixon ordered him released from

jail pending appeal. Calley became "the most privileged prisoner in America," spending the next three years in his own apartment at Fort Benning and enjoying regular visits from his girlfriend, who told the press: "I know that deep down he wouldn't hurt anyone. Just look at the way he takes care of his pets and how gentle he is."[17]

Although public approval of the war itself continued to fall, Nixon's political approval ratings went up when he announced that he would review the verdict, and ordered Calley released from the stockade. General Peers criticized Nixon's response in his report:

> Instead of treating the public clamor over Calley's conviction as a short-term political problem to be "defused" by promising to review the matter, the President could well have taken the occasion to remind the American people of the country's obligations to punish those who commit war crimes, of the overwhelming evidence of Calley's guilt as adduced at the trial, and of the fact that he had been found guilty after a long trial, not by anti-military war protesters but by a panel of his peers.[18]

The Corporate Media and Public Response

When the U.S. military first acknowledged the My Lai massacre and Calley's case in September 1969, the national media "responded with a lack of attention" as well as a lack of curiosity. It was not until late November that the *New York Times* published its first editorial on the subject, calling reports of the atrocity "so shocking, so contrary to principles for which this country has always stood, as to be beyond belief." To what principles did the *Times* refer, given the history of genocide and massacres against Native Americans that included Sand Creek, Wounded Knee, and the Trail of Tears? Other journals had "detailed accounts of the war in the Philippines, noting the resemblance between the charges of misconduct … against the U.S. in that particular campaign—that its soldiers routinely engaged in torture, in the wholesale destruction of villages and in the killing of prisoners and civilians."[19]

Historians Kendrick Oliver, Nick Turse, and Patrick Hagopian challenge the media coverage of the My Lai massacre and the war itself. Prior to 1968 and the Tet Offensive, Oliver writes, "little of the casual, random violence which often characterized" the war was reported in the news media in the United States. Contrary to the common belief that the press, and broader

mass media, opposed and undermined official U.S. policy in Vietnam, it "actually produced a reporting culture that was broadly sympathetic to the methods and objectives" of Washington's policy and supported the idea that the war was a Noble Cause. In the early years of U.S. involvement, "the political convictions of most print and broadcast journalists, and of the media outlets that employed them, faithfully reflected those of the foreign policy establishment."[20]

Oliver contends that mainstream reporters "were invested in news that did not break with precedent.… With only a handful of exceptions, American journalists chose not to disturb the silence over the darkest aspects of the national war effort." But by December 1969, "the revelations about My Lai started a flood of other horror stories. Dozens of journalists, soldiers, and visitors to Viet Nam [began] to recall other incidents of US brutality." Despite the facts and nature of the massacre, the majority "continued to express support for the national endeavor in Vietnam and for the American troops, support which extended even to those soldiers accused of war crimes." Calley's criminal acts did not upset citizens as much as the fact that he was "on trial for murder by the same institution which had ordered him … to kill for his country." The facts of the massacre and his case did not fundamentally change views on the nature of the war, or views toward Vietnamese. Most Americans maintained "a respect for national institutions and for the integrity of national power."[21]

Some Conclusions on the My Lai and My Khe Massacres

What should citizens draw from the My Lai and My Khe massacres, and their relationship to the American war in Vietnam? What Bilton and Sim wrote in the 1980s is even truer today: My Lai is "almost completely forgotten, erased almost entirely from the national consciousness.… What was first a 'massacre' quickly became a 'tragedy' and was then referred to as an 'incident'"—the term now used by the official U.S. Vietnam Commemoration. Kendrick Oliver concludes: "It is no surprise, therefore, to find a similar self-absorption evident in postwar narratives, in which the tragedy of the war resonates primarily in its consequences for Americans, not for the people of Vietnam."[22]

When it comes to My Lai and the war itself, Noam Chomsky places the ultimate blame where it belongs: “The planners in Washington are the real war criminals, not the soldiers in the field. The chain of command starts with the civilians sitting in Washington. These were the people charged at Nuremberg and Tokyo.” It is those “with the privilege and the education and the training that are also the decision makers, either in the government or in business or in the doctrinal institutions.… They’re the ones responsible, far more than those who don’t have any choices.”[23]

This view echoes the sentiments expressed about the First World War by the Socialist labor activist and presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs:

> The working class who fight all the battles, the working class who make the supreme sacrifices, the working class who freely shed their blood and furnish their corpses have never yet had a voice in either declaring war or making peace. It is the ruling class that invariably does both. They alone declare war and then alone make peace.… They are continually talking about their patriotic duty. It is not their duty but your patriotic duty that they are concerned about. There is a decided difference. Their patriotic duty never takes them to the firing line or chucks them in the trenches.[24]

The Military Antiwar Movement

U.S. antiwar veterans challenged Washington, the media, and the public’s denial on the war and belief in the essential goodness and honor of the country by providing firsthand evidence of what happened in Vietnam. These veterans used the My Lai massacre to raise consciousness and demand that powerful civilian officials and the Army brass be indicted for their role in the war. A key organization in this effort was the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), founded in June 1967. It and the Veterans for Peace (VFP) would challenge, and face hostility from, the strongly pro-war American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Historian Andrew E. Hunt commends the antiwar movement that emerged from within the military. The earliest veterans’ group to call for peace in Vietnam was the Ad Hoc Committee of Veterans for Peace in Vietnam that placed a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, endorsing the November 27, 1965 antiwar march in Washington. Out of that demonstration, in January 1966, came Veterans for Peace in Vietnam—

composed of mostly veterans of the Second World War. As one member stated, “No one is better qualified than veterans to make the public aware that it is patriotic to oppose the war in Vietnam.” By the end of 1968, VFP had “thriving chapters across the country and scores of members,” mostly from the Second World War and Korean War.[25]

VVAW’s first action was a full-page ad in the *New York Times* in November 1967 just before a major demonstration in Washington. “We are veterans of the Viet-Nam war. We believe that this ‘conflict’ in which our country is engaged is wrong, unjustifiable and contrary to the principle of self-determination on which this nation was founded.” The ad laid out VVAW principles, “all of which emphasized the right of the Vietnamese to self-determination.” There was a strong and positive response to the ad, but hostile responses from the government. Secretary of Defense McNamara, incensed, demanded that the FBI investigate many of those who had signed the ad. The CIA also investigated the group, in violation of U.S. law that prevented it from engaging in domestic surveillance against citizens, but it was “unable to find any evidence of foreign influence on the antiwar veterans.” This repression continued during the Nixon administration, and included Justice Department “attempts to find something to hit the veterans with, and local police, military, and … FBI efforts to infiltrate the group.”[26]

Unlike student antiwar activists, VVAW members “arrived at their radicalism in different ways [and most] … came from working-class backgrounds. Almost none went to Vietnam as radicals. The majority … moved to the left as a result of their experiences in Southeast Asia and their subsequent politicization at home.” Although founded in 1967, VVAW’s emergence in the early 1970s “had a profound impact on the antiwar movement.… [The VVAW] transformed the movement by placing Vietnam veterans in the forefront of the nation-wide struggle to end the Vietnam War.” Its members included “some of the most talented and perceptive organizers in the antiwar movement,” and chapters around the country “offered services … that predated similar Veterans Administration programs by nine years.” While VVAW activists gained support and respect from a growing number of veterans and the public, “they also stirred fears in the highest levels of government.” These conflicts with U.S. officials and agencies were worsened by the presence of government agents and

informants who “advocated confrontations with police and other authorities.”[27]

In early February 1971, VVAW organized and hosted the Winter Soldier Investigation, at which former GIs gave detailed and grim accounts of what happened in Vietnam, “including war crimes they had witnessed or indeed committed themselves.” The VVAW investigation and other efforts by veterans gave “unambiguous testimony about the … atrocities in Vietnam” at public meetings, antiwar rallies, and war crimes forums. These veterans “were doing what no American fighting men had done for 200 years: speaking out en masse again their own military. Describing the crimes committed in Vietnam in the name of America, they were, in effect, testifying against themselves.”[28]

Hunt points out that during the early years of organizing, some VVAW members who spoke out against the war were booed and jeered by civilian antiwar activists. Antiwar activists such as longtime pacifist David Dellinger, however, argued that it was important to welcome GIs and veterans to the antiwar movement: “In a sensible world, it would be obvious that there is a natural alliance of sympathy and common interest between the men whose lives are threatened in a dishonest and unnecessary war and those who are trying to bring that war to an end.” The tension between VVAW members and some antiwar activists disappeared as the war continued and they worked together, though VVAW faced continued hostility from those who supported the war, and major veterans groups.[29]

Economist and labor historian Michael Yates has discussed the vital role of VVAW and how it reinvigorated the antiwar movement, and helped it gain supporters “simply because veterans had instant credibility with much of the public and could not be accused of elitism because most of them were solidly working class.” In an extraordinary moment in U.S. history, thousands of soldiers “spoke openly, honestly, and publicly about the folly of war and the costs to human beings and societies of allowing young men … to engage in senseless murder.” VVAW was joined by VFP and other antiwar veterans who “participated in teach-ins, taught classes, produced vibrant art and literature, organized antiwar coffee houses near military bases, published an abundance of newspapers, pamphlets, and posters, helped on-duty soldiers form unions and fight legal battles, aided those seeking asylum in Canada and other countries, and much more.” After the

war ended in 1975, small numbers of veterans and other Americans visited Vietnam, “to make common cause with the Vietnamese and do what they could to aid in the rebuilding of the nation. They have been tireless reminders of what was done in the name of the United States.”[30]

Some Americans, therefore, were not in a state of denial about the My Lai massacre and Vietnam policies. In the late 1970s, 13,000 citizens and veterans raised funds to build a hospital near the site of the massacre. Ten years later, “a new clinic was built by a charity … led by Cherie Clark, who had worked as a pediatric nurse during the final years of the war.” In 1992, California veterans installed a solar-powered generator at the hospital. U.S. veteran Mike Boehm, along with Madison, Wisconsin, Quakers, “raised $15,000 to establish a revolving loan scheme, which has provided over 400 of the village’s women with the capital they needed to start and operate their own small businesses.” And in June 2011, “teams from Vets for Peace and the Medics of Illinois, visited Son My … to deliver medical supplies to the clinic, build a kitchen and replace its window shutters with glass.”[31] Amid the historical amnesia that surrounds My Lai and My Khe in the United States, these are powerful and moving actions.

The first antiwar efforts within the U.S. military in the 1960s, however, were not organized group efforts such as VVAW but individual acts of conscience and resistance by active-duty soldiers. These included Lieutenant Henry Howe, who carried a sign denouncing President Johnson’s “fascist war” in a peace march at Fort Bliss, Texas. Although Howe was not in uniform, he was court-martialed for “behavior insulting to his commander-inchief and sentenced … to two years of hard labor.” A powerful act of defiance came in June 1966 when Privates James Johnson, Dennis Mora, and David Samas were ordered to Vietnam for active duty. The “Fort Hood Three” refused and were sentenced to three years in prison. The Supreme Court refused to hear their appeal, a common practice during the war; the Court never declared the war illegal, even though the conflict blatantly violated the declaration of war clause in the Constitution and international covenants. In October 1966, Captain Howard Levy became the first U.S. Army officer to disobey a direct order during the war when he “refused to train Special Forces medics because … the Green Berets were participating in war crimes that violated the Nuremberg Trial proceedings.” He was sentenced to three years of hard labor.[32]

Historian Jeremy Kuzmarov discusses the American war and the antiwar movement within the military in his analysis of the "so-called drug crisis in Vietnam." The drug myth was "critical … in shaping the vigorous character of Nixon's policy and its international focus." Drug use in the U.S. Army "was so widespread in Vietnam that it contributed to a breakdown in the military's fighting capacities." When it "reached its zenith in mid-1971" it helped divert public attention "from the policies that had produced and perpetuated the war in Vietnam." The focus on drugs helped Nixon, allowing him "to deflect criticism for his failure to engender 'peace with honor' in Vietnam." He had "succeeded in making the alleged 'drug crisis' an issue of comparable if not greater national concern than the war itself." For years after the war ended in 1975, Hollywood and network television "reinforced the notion that drug abuse had provoked the nation's military collapse" in Vietnam.[33]

The "myth of the addicted army … helped to skew public memory of the Vietnam War by advancing the impression that pure and innocent American youth had been corrupted by illegal drugs—and not by flawed policies, institutional failings, or cultural chauvinism, as most historians would conclude." This myth, along with that about POW/MIAs and the abuse of returning Vietnam veterans by antiwar activists, was used by supporters of the war who were "eager to justify the revival of an aggressive foreign policy and to denigrate" those activists. The lasting legacy of the myth of the addicted Army reveals "America's long-standing inability to come to terms with the moral consequences of the Vietnam War." Through casting their soldiers "as victims and the U.S. military defeat as a 'tragedy,' Americans were able to deflect responsibility for the mass destruction and loss of [Vietnamese] life" and "avoid serious reconsideration of the ideological principles that rationalized the American intervention."[34]

Essentially, it was organized resistance and disorganized resistance (via drug use, shirking duty, insubordination, and desertion) within the U.S. military, not domestic protest on campuses, that became the most powerful antiwar force against the war and the military hierarchy. In a brutally frank admission, Colonel Robert D. Heinl Jr., Marine combat veteran, historian, and military analyst, captures the ramifications of this resistance:

> The morale, discipline and battleworthiness of the U.S. Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States. By every conceivable indicator, our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and noncommissioned officers, drug-ridden, and dispirited where not near-mutinous.… Sedition … infests the Armed Forces. At best count, there appear to be some 144 underground newspapers published on or aimed at U.S. military bases in this country or overseas.… At least 14 GI dissent organizations … now operate more or less openly. Ancillary to these are at least six antiwar veterans' groups.… By present count [there are] at least 11 (some go as high as 26) off-base antiwar "coffee houses." … Racial conflicts … are erupting murderously in all services.… Desertion rates are going straight up in Army, Marines, and Air Force.… The Marines in 1970 had the highest desertion index in the modern history of the Corps.[35]

The Antiwar Movement at Home

Historians Marvin Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn B. Young, and H. Bruce Franklin assert that the political and military history of the war cannot be understood without taking the "character and role of the antiwar movement" into consideration. U.S. citizens "never supported the war strongly enough to agree to pay for it with taxes, or even to demonstrate for it in significant numbers, less to go fight in it willingly." By an overwhelming majority, voters were not "willing to vote for any national candidate who pledged the nation to fight until 'victory.' In fact, from 1964 through the end of the war, every presidential nominee of both major parties, excepting Barry Goldwater in 1964, ran as some kind of self-proclaimed peace candidate."[36] This included Richard Nixon's famous 1968 campaign pledge regarding his "secret plan" to end the war.

The antiwar movement built upon the black struggle for human rights in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. During the most critical period of the war, the black civil rights movement and the antiwar movement began to come together, something that worried U.S. officials and Pentagon strategists. It was black civil rights activists who first articulated "the anti-imperialist consciousness toward which many antiwar activists would eventually move." In July 1965, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party urged blacks to oppose the war: "No one has a right to ask us to risk our lives and kill other Colored People in Santo Domingo and Vietnam, so that the White Americans can get richer. We will be looked upon as traitors by all the Colored People of the world if the Negro people continue to fight

and die without a cause." Six months later, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) stated: "We believe the U.S. government has been deceptive in claims of concern for the freedom of the Vietnamese people … just as the government has been deceptive in claiming concern for the freedom of the colored people in such other countries as the Dominican Republic, the Congo, South Africa, Rhodesia and in the U.S. itself."[37]

Twenty years before the first large antiwar protest, organized in April 1965 by the campus-based Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a demonstration opposing U.S. involvement took place in November 1945 in New York City—a "relatively small" one called by the Socialist Workers Party to "protest the massacre of colonial peoples of Indonesia, Indo-China and the imperialist intervention in China." Nine years later, during the battle of Dien Bien Phu that led to the end of French colonialism in Vietnam, the public reacted negatively to Vice President Nixon's call for direct U.S. military involvement to support the French. Citizen opposition to Nixon's proposal was quite strong across the nation and was felt in Washington.[38]

The movement against the war that most people recall in the 1960s, therefore, did not arise in a social vacuum but was connected to earlier efforts to oppose U.S. involvement in the 1940s and 1950s. SDS, the most influential New Left group, led the student antiwar movement of the 1960s. In its all-too-brief history, it played a crucial role in raising the civic literacy and political consciousness of that era. SDS activists were often outstanding students at the best universities, and the most civically literate youth in the nation, particularly on U.S. foreign policy. Violence by a tiny faction within SDS and the larger antiwar movement received the greatest attention and condemnation from political officials and the mainstream media, which lauded a war that would leave millions dead in a ravaged and devastated land. Although these destructive acts toward persons and property were but a small part of thousands of nonviolent and educational activities, the violent actions by a self-appointed, narcissistic SDS "vanguard" hurt the overall opposition to the American war. On the issue of antiwar violence, the philosopher Herbert Marcuse was right to assert: "Can there be any meaningful comparison, in magnitude and criminality, between the unlawful acts committed by the rebels … on the campuses … and the deeds

perpetrated by the forces of order in Vietnam, in Bolivia, in Indonesia, in Guatemala, on the other?"[39]

The campus-based, increasingly broad-based antiwar movement that opposed U.S. intervention in Vietnam emerged during the Johnson presidency. Most of its efforts were not dramatic but were the result of long, patient, and slow efforts to organize a powerful force against the war that included "giving speeches at teach-ins and rallies … writing pamphlets, articles, and books … circulating petitions and leaflets … marching, sitting-in, demonstrating at army bases, lobbying Congress … blocking induction centers and napalm plants, and going to prison for defying the draft."[40] A vital part of demonstrations, rallies, and other gatherings against the conflict were the antiwar and justice folksongs written and performed by such artists as Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Peter, Paul, and Mary, and Pete Seeger.

The Road to the End of the American War

As the war continued to grind on, and consistent with past U.S. policy, Nixon refused to deal with the key problem: who was to hold political power in South Vietnam. He continued to blame North Vietnam for the resistance in the South, and in late 1972 ordered the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong in the heaviest air raids of the war. This bombing for psychological impact explains the tremendous destruction of civilian populations in these two cities. There was worldwide protest over both the large number of civilians killed and the hospitals and other humanitarian buildings destroyed. In late December 1972, the United States was forced to halt the bombing, and to sign an agreement to end the war in January.

Paris Peace Conference

On January 27, 1973, representatives of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV, North Vietnam), the Provisional Revolutionary Government (the PRG, which emerged out of the NLF and other nationalist groups in the South), the United States, and the Thieu regime gathered in Paris to sign the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam. It recognized the Saigon regime and the PRG as co-equal administrations in

South Vietnam, and committed the United States and the other signatories to respect the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Vietnam. It required the United States to "stop all its military activities against the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam … and end the mining of [its] territorial waters, ports, harbors and waterways." Another article of the agreement stated: "The United States will not continue its military involvement or intervene in the internal affairs of South Vietnam." The PRG and North Vietnamese supported the agreement, sensing a victory through a political settlement that had been denied when the United States and the Diem regime sabotaged the 1954 Geneva Agreements. The Thieu regime was extremely dissatisfied, however, and signed the agreement reluctantly.[41]

The agreement ended U.S. bombing of Vietnam, led to the withdrawal of American troops, and brought the release of American POWs. As happened at Geneva in 1954, a U.S.-Saigon regime alliance subverted the treaty and forced a military settlement in place of a political one. From the start, the Nixon administration continued to recognize the Thieu regime as "the sole legitimate government of South Vietnam." In violation of a key article, the United States continued its involvement in the affairs of South Vietnam by sending General Thieu at least $800 million in military aid and planning an additional billion to enlarge Saigon's army, some of which ended up in the pockets of Thieu and other South Vietnamese officials. Another article ordered the United States to totally withdraw all military and police advisers from South Vietnam, but the United States got around this prohibition by sending eight thousand so-called civilian advisers and technicians to Thieu's regime.[42]

While the United States was not to "impose any political tendency or personality on the South Vietnamese people," there was widespread agreement that U.S. aid was absolutely crucial to Thieu's survival. Reports of corruption, mismanagement, black-marketeering, and outright pilfering of the aid increased Thieu's unpopularity both in the United States and South Vietnam. The *Washington Post* reported, "President Nixon asked Congress … to authorize a $2.9 billion military and economic aid program [for Indochina] that pointedly omitted any reconstruction assistance for North Vietnam."[43] This violated the Peace Agreement article that called for

the United States to contribute to the postwar reconstruction of North Vietnam.

The frequently used rationale for U.S. aid to the South Vietnamese regime claimed it was to "balance the aid given by the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China to North Vietnam." From 1966 through 1973, however, the United States spent 29 times as much as the Soviet Union and China combined: U.S., $107.1 billion, Soviet Union, $2.57 billion, and China, $1.08 billion.[44]

The *Washington Post* summarized the regime's reaction to the Paris Agreement: "Thieu is continuing to run South Vietnam almost as if the Paris cease-fire agreement had never been signed, with the army and police as his principal instruments of statecraft," concluding, "South Vietnam remains under martial law with the army acting as a police force, court system, propaganda agent and civil administrator down to the lowest level of government. In short, the country remains, as a prominent government official put it, 'a garrison state.'"[45] The resistance forces in the South and North Vietnam, therefore, were once again forced into a military settlement, but no real attempt was made by American media to assess who subverted the agreement.

By 1974, most Americans had become thoroughly disenchanted with the war. The only remaining support for the conflict came from the Nixon administration and, after Nixon's resignation as president in August 1974, the incoming Ford administration, as Secretary of State Henry Kissinger pushed for more aid for what some suggested had become an obsession for him. The Pentagon had continued to urge increased support for the rapidly deteriorating military situation. The beginning of the end, however, was signaled by congressional refusal to approve increases in funding.

The Collapse of the Thieu Regime and the End of the American War

By early 1975, during the Ford administration, the Thieu regime had a huge numerical military superiority over the PRG and North Vietnamese resistance forces. The last months of the war showed that despite a massive army and air force, as a fighting force it was worthless and would collapse at the first real sign of battle. And that is exactly what happened in the few months leading up to the end of the war in late April 1975. Thieu fled

Saigon nine days before the victory of the resistance forces, leaving for exile in Taiwan aboard a U.S. transport plane with tons of baggage and two suitcases filled with gold bars. (He had also been deeply involved in the CIA-assisted drug trade in South Vietnam.) Historian Alfred McCoy details this sordid history in *The Politics of Heroin*, starting with the Diem regime and continuing through the Thieu-Ky rule. CIA planes that flew intelligence missions were used for drug transport, under the control of Colonel Ky. When he became General Ky and premier of South Vietnam (1965–67), "most of the opium seems to have been finding its way to [the] South through the Vietnamese air force." As the South unraveled in the mid-1970s, evidence revealed that high-ranking officials in the regime "were competing with the air force for the dominant position in the traffic."[46]

The end to the Vietnam War came swiftly in 1975. In March, Thieu ordered his troops to withdraw from the northern provinces as a result of the defeat there. The "strategic withdrawal" collapsed in a rout, however, and as South Vietnamese regime soldiers fled they slaughtered women and children for scarce space on evacuating planes, ships, and motor vehicles; they even stole airplanes rather than utilize them to defend their country. In contrast to U.S. press reports of a North Vietnam final offensive in the South, Australian correspondent Wilfred Burchett contends:

> In 1975, there were practically no set battles, except for the brief one … guarding the approaches to Saigon. What happened was that guerrilla forces, which had been encircling towns and bases, in cooperation with people's organizations inside the towns, won over many soldiers within the enemy's armed forces. Popular uprisings and infiltrations were combined with the operations of the regular Liberation Armed Forces in a coordination of effort for which people and soldiers had all been preparing ever since the National Liberation Front was founded in December 1960.[47]

Burchett concludes his observations of this thirty-year war with insights that the U.S. public would have if it knew the accurate history of the conflict:

> Military historians will study the phenomenon of the defeat of the mightiest of the imperialist powers in Vietnam for decades to come. Unless they comprehend the nature of people's war, their conclusions will always be inaccurate. But to accept the validity of people's war is not possible for orthodox military analysts. The Westmorelands and Weyands of this world will go to their tombs saying: "If only our hands had not been tied … if only Congress had not stabbed us in the back."[48]

The Vietnam Commemoration and the corporate media history of the American war continue the massive denial of what happened during this epic conflict. When one examines U.S. international policy since 1975, it is clear that a fundamental lesson has not been learned, since the United States continues to violently interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. One simply has to look at the historical record of direct and covert U.S. aggression since Vietnam—for example, against Angola, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Iraq, Libya, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Panama, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen, among others, to see that this basic lesson remains unlearned.

6

Some Lessons and Myths of the American War in Vietnam

The following lessons and myths of the American War re-ëxamine and expand upon issues raised in the book.

It Was an Imperialist War

Fifty years ago, Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, editors of the *Monthly Review*, called the American war in Vietnam an example of imperial aggression, built upon the necessity of U.S. capitalism to maintain and extend "its foreign involvement and to strengthen its control over the economies and societies into which it penetrates." In a commentary titled "Why Vietnam" they assert, "One can say without fear of exaggeration that if [the basic nature of imperialism] is not understood there is no possibility of understanding what is happening in the world today." It must be understood as "an entire social order—a set of class relations, a mode of government, an ideological superstructure—and, what is more, a social order which is riddled with conflicts and contradictions."[1]

Key to imperialism after the Second World War, writes the late economist and *Monthly Review* editor Harry Magdoff, is keeping the world safe for trade and investment by giant multinational corporations. This is linked with two phenomena: (1) the need "to resist and repress socialist nations and to defeat national liberation movements designed to release … countries from dependence on the imperialist network"; and (2) the expansion of U.S. power "to fill 'vacuums' created by the decline of Western European and Japanese influence in Asia, Africa, and Latin America."[2]

According to historian Michael Parenti, “Imperialism is what empires are all about. Imperialism is what empires do,” as “one country brings to bear … economic and military power upon another country in order to expropriate [its] land, labor, natural resources, capital and markets.” Imperialism ultimately enriches the home country’s dominant class. The process involves “unspeakable repression and state terror,” and must rely repeatedly “upon armed coercion and repression.” The ultimate aim of modern U.S. imperialism is to make the world safe for multinational corporations and to “prevent alternative, independent, self-defining nations from emerging … that might threaten” U.S. control. When discussing imperialism, therefore, “the prime unit of analysis usually should be the *economic class* rather than the nation-state.”[3]

U.S. imperial actions in Vietnam and elsewhere in the world are often described as reflecting “national interests,” “national security,” or “national defense.” Endless U.S. wars and regime changes actually represent the class interests of the powerful who own and govern the country. Noam Chomsky argues that if one wishes to understand imperial wars, “it is a good idea to begin by investigating the domestic social structure. Who sets foreign policy? What interest do these people represent? What is the domestic source of their power?”[4]

The United States Committed War Crimes Including Torture

U.S. war crimes in Vietnam were legion; the evidence is overwhelming. The most death-producing and devastating war crime “was the widespread U.S. bombing and use of artillery against villages throughout Indochina.”[5] These bombing attacks were calculated and planned, part of the deliberate mass murder of civilians—something the U.S. war makers did on a massive scale in Korea.

The American war was waged “against the entire Vietnamese population,” designed to terrorize them into submission. The United States “made South Vietnam a sea of fire as a matter of policy, turning an entire nation into a target. This is not accidental but intentional and intrinsic to the U.S.’s strategic and political premises.” In such an attack “against an entire people … barbarism can be the only consequence of [U.S.] … tactics,” conceived and organized by “the true architects of terror,” the “respected

men of manners and conventional views who calculate and act behind desks and computers rather than in villages in the field."[6]

Anthony Russo, the less-well-known whistleblower who helped Marine Corps veteran and Pentagon analyst Daniel Ellsberg leak the *Pentagon Papers*, worked in Vietnam during the war for the RAND Corporation and attempted to report "on the systematic torture" of NLF prisoners by the CIA and U.S. military agents. Based on his firsthand experience interviewing these prisoners, who had nearly all been tortured, Russo "blew the whistle on American torture policy in Vietnam." They "were tortured 'as a matter of course,'" with "men being hung by the feet or thumbs, waterboarding, electric shocks to the genitals, and solitary confinement." These techniques are "strikingly similar to those revealed in the December 2014 Senate torture report." They also included rape and prisoners dying from "'pump and dump' procedures, named for the process of pumping detainees for information and then dumping their bodies." Russo was in Vietnam to see techniques that would become part of "institutionalized CIA torture practices that would span four decades and four continents." His revelations are so explosive, that almost fifty years later, RAND still keeps his report on CIA torture in Vietnam a secret.[7]

The U.S. mistreatment of Vietnamese civilians and prisoners of war was strictly prohibited by the Geneva Convention, which the United States signed. "*No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability of any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification for torture*." U.S. officials and mass media pundits continue to assert that torture is a violation of "our values." This is not true: actual values are expressed by what the U.S. government and its military forces do—not what they say. Torture is as American as apple pie, widely practiced in U.S. wars and domestic prisons.

Washington Lied

Government lying was an essential part of the war. Daniel Ellsberg exposed one huge lie that had a profound impact on the course of the conflict: the official story of the Tonkin Gulf crisis of August 1964. President Johnson and Robert McNamara told the public that

> the North Vietnamese, for the second time in two days, had attacked U.S. warships on "routine patrol in international waters"; that this was clearly a "deliberate" pattern of "naked aggression"; that the evidence for the second attack, like the first, was "unequivocal"; that the attack had been "unprovoked"; and that the United States, by responding in order to deter any repetition, intended no wider war.

All of these assurances were untrue. The destroyers "were on a secret intelligence mission … penetrating well within what the North Vietnamese regarded as their territorial waters." The State Department denied any knowledge that South Vietnamese regime boats had attacked North Vietnamese islands, and were assisted by the U.S. ships, as did McNamara in his press conferences.[8]

In secret testimony before congressional committees, Secretary of State Rusk claimed that the United States "supported [the attacks against North Vietnam] and knew about them in general terms but … there was little [detailed] knowledge in Washington." Each claim was a lie, but this was unknown to the public given the secret nature of the testimony. The truth, as Ellsberg states, is that "every particular detail of these operations was known and approved by the highest authorities in Washington."[9] These official lies are not part of the Vietnam Commemoration lesson on the Tonkin Gulf.

The War Was a Crime—Not a Mistake

Since the end of the war in 1975, there has been a concerted effort on the part of U.S. officials, the corporate media, and influential intellectuals to portray U.S. actions as a Noble Cause that went astray. The late Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., historian and Kennedy adviser, called Vietnam "a triumph of the politics of inadvertence. We have achieved our present entanglement, not after due and deliberate consideration, but through a series of small decisions. The Vietnam story is a tragedy without villains."[10] American war scholar and historian Christian Appy profoundly disagrees, arguing that the findings of the *Pentagon Papers* and other historical documents provide "ample evidence to contradict this interpretation.… The United States did not inadvertently slip into the morass of war; it produced the war quite deliberately."[11]

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Condemned the War—And Was Vilified for It

Dr. King's historic Riverside Church (New York City) speech against the American war, on April 4, 1967, courageously confronted bitter and uncomfortable truths about the war and this society. He passionately and eloquently proclaimed that he "could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.… I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government." The war was "a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality we will find ourselves organizing" committees to oppose other wars "for the next generation [and] attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy."[12]

King's magnificent speech, relatively unknown in this country, elicited strong attacks by the political and corporate media establishment and civil rights leaders. These included Vice President Hubert Humphrey; the *New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, and *Life* magazine; Ralph Bunche, Nobel Laureate and United Nations diplomat; and Roy Wilkins, NAACP director. *Life* stated: "Much of his speech was a demagogic slander that sounded like a script for Radio Hanoi." The corporate media condemnation of King actually reflected public sentiment, as a Harris Poll taken in May 1967 revealed that 73 percent of Americans opposed his antiwar position, including 50 percent of African Americans.[13]

The *Times* strongly condemned King, calling his effort to link civil rights and opposition to the war a "disservice to both. The moral issues in Vietnam are less clear-cut than he suggests." It closed its harsh editorial by stating that there were "no simple or easy answers to the war in Vietnam or to racial injustice in this country. Linking these hard, complex problems will lead not to solutions but to deeper confusion." The *Washington Post* claimed that some of his assertions were "sheer inventions of unsupported fantasy," that King had "diminished his usefulness to his cause, to his country and to his people."[14]

Some prominent African Americans condemned King's position. An especially vicious attack came from black journalist Carl Rowan, a close ally of President Johnson and head of the U.S. Information Agency—who

told the White House press secretary that “everyone in the Civil Rights movement has known that King is getting advice from a communist.” In an article in the *Reader’s Digest*, which had a circulation in the millions, Rowan accused King “of being an egomaniac who was under the sway of communists.”[15] This is ironic given that the alleged communist in question, Stanley Levinson, consistently urged King not to publicly oppose the war and stick to his civil rights efforts.

On November 9, 1967, I was Dr. King’s co-host and driver when he delivered the annual Graduate Student Association Convocation address of the State University of New York at Buffalo. In our brief time together, we discussed the American war, his April speech, and the harsh attacks he received for condemning the war. He calmly explained that despite the vicious attacks upon his integrity and patriotism, he had to oppose the war because conscience demanded it. He courageously stayed the course until his tragic assassination five months later.

The Corporate Media Didn’t Oppose the War—Only How It Was Fought

The assertion that the so-called liberal media opposed and undermined the war effort is one of the great myths of the Vietnam conflict. They endorsed U.S. support of French colonialism and only emerged as tactical critics of the American war after the Tet Offensive in early 1968. The corporate media never challenged the fundamental premises of the Noble Cause principle and this imperial war. The essence of the media’s response to Vietnam is similar to what *CBS Evening News* anchor Dan Rather said about the bombing of the former Yugoslavia at the end of the twentieth century: “I’m an American, and I’m an American reporter. And yes, when there’s combat involving Americans, you can criticize me if you must, damn me if you must, but I’m always pulling for us to win.”[16]

Daniel Hallin’s *The “Uncensored War”* disputes the prevailing American belief that “the relation between the media and the government during Vietnam was in fact one of conflict.” Hallin, and media scholars Edward Morgan and Philip Knightley, challenge the erroneous belief about the tough and hostile media’s role in undermining U.S. policy and soldiers in Vietnam. Another myth of the war is that the major television network coverage of the conflict turned citizens against it. But a Harris Poll

commissioned by *Newsweek* in the summer of 1967 found that "only 31 percent of those questioned said that TV moved them to oppose the war." They were then asked if "television made them more inclined to 'back up the boys in Vietnam' or more inclined to oppose the war. More than two to one said that the coverage of the war caused them to want to support the troops rather than to oppose the war they were fighting."[17]

Communications scholar Michael X. Delli Carpini asserts that the mainstream media were "restrained by [their] own loyalty, and did not oppose or undermine the war." Since those who report, edit, and produce "are citizens [and] even patriots," when it comes to war they tend to "avoid sabotaging the national interest.… Hence, all other things being equal, the inclination is to report what the government wants reported." The media do not "advocate or even neutrally present views that fall outside of the dominant culture" and this is essential to understanding their coverage of the American war.[18] During the war, government officials' views were deemed newsworthy and legitimate by the *New York Times*, even though antiwar activists, reporters, and scholars exposed their lies. The views of prominent dissenters such as Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, who accurately documented the facts of the war, were not.

As for the widely believed opinion that nightly television news brought the carnage of the war into people's homes, Carpini points out that prior to the Tet Offensive in early 1968, only about one-fifth of the film reports showed actual combat, and these were confined to "a few incoming mortar rounds or a crackle of sniper fire." When actual battle scenes were available to the networks, "they were edited according to explicit guidelines barring the use of graphic film of wounded American soldiers or suffering civilians."[19] The belief that graphic violence in Vietnam came home to the American living room each night is untrue.

The coverage of the My Lai massacre, which never mentioned the My Khe massacre committed the same day about a mile away, also followed the mainstream media pattern: it raised some facts that could not be avoided, but never challenged the morality of the war effort. In addition, the media's focus on Lieutenant Calley, "rather than on the massacre itself, pegged it as a story or individual misdeed, declining morale, and American justice rather than military atrocity." The major nightly television news anchors "also separated My Lai from any systematic pattern or policy." As Howard K.

Smith of ABC put it, “My Lai was for Americans an exceptional horror. My Lais for the other side are a daily way of life.”[20] When it came to actual massacres, however, Smith’s assertion needs to be reversed given the documented record of massive U.S. massacres throughout the war.

The First Antiwar Protests Came from the Merchant Marine Services

Opposition to U.S. intervention in Vietnam did not begin with student protests in the mid-1960s, but with American Merchant Mariners in the fall of 1945. They had been diverted from bringing U.S. troops home from Europe to transport French troops to Vietnam to reclaim that colony. Some of these merchant mariners vigorously condemned the transport “to further the imperialist policies of foreign governments,” and a group from among the crews of four ships signed a petition that condemned the U.S. government for helping to “subjugate the native population of Vietnam.”[21]

Some two decades later, the most powerful opposition to the American war would come within the military itself—including criticism by Generals Matthew Ridgway, David Shoup, James Gavin, and Hugh Hester. According to political scientist Robert Buzzanco, these “respected and influential military figures … initially spoke out against the war while the domestic consensus in support of American involvement was still strong.” Shoup and Gavin argued that the many of those fighting with the National Liberation Front “were not ideological communists but victims of a government and upper-class oppression who had revolted as nationalists”; that Ho Chi Minh “was a nationalist, albeit a communist, too, who would not be a puppet of other communist powers.” Shoup described the war as a conflict between “those crooks in Saigon” and Vietnamese nationalists who sought a better life.[22]

General Hester called the war immoral and unjust, an act of American aggression. In 1966, Shoup stated that if the United States “had and would keep our dirty, bloody, dollar-crooked fingers out of the business of these nations so full of depressed exploited people, they will arrive at a solution of their own.” The generals also supported veterans’ antiwar efforts, and all signed a *New York Times* antiwar ad in 1967. Shoup and Hester supported and spoke at rallies sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

Because of their efforts, the FBI investigated them for Presidents Johnson and Nixon.[23]

Christian Appy points out that in 1969–70, "substantial numbers of soldiers opposed the war they were sent to fight. They voiced objections, avoided combat, and sometimes engaged in collective defiance of direct orders." There was a great deal of protest by black soldiers, many of whom "realized … that a number of prominent black people they respected were protesting the war," for example, Muhammad Ali, Julian Bond, Malcolm X, and Dr. King. By 1969, "combat avoidance increasingly developed into direct 'combat refusals,' the military's euphemism for mutiny. The most common instances involved small units refusing to move into areas where the men believed they might get pinned down by enemy fire."[24]

Marine combat veteran, poet, and writer W. D. Ehrhart spoke for thousands of vets who fought in the war and came home to challenge it:

> I'd learned that the eighty-eight years of French colonial rule … had been harsh and cruel; that the Americans had supported Ho Chi Minh and his Vietminh guerillas with arms and equipment and training during World War Two, and in return, Ho's forces had provided the Americans with intelligence and had helped to rescue downed American pilots; … that Ho had spent years trying to gain American support for Vietnamese independence; … that at the end of World War Two, the U.S. had supported the French claim to Indochina; … that North and South Vietnam were nothing more than an artificial construction of the Western powers, created at Geneva in 1954.… I'd had to learn it all on my own, most of it years after I'd left Vietnam.[25]

Myths and Lies about the Antiwar Movement Are Endless

One can begin to undo the myths and lies about the antiwar movement with historian Michael Gillen's observation: protest against the war in the 1960s and 1970s was built on earlier political opposition to U.S. Vietnam policy in the 1940s and 1950s.

Labor Studies scholar Penny Lewis counters a number of beliefs about the antiwar movement in her *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks*, for example, the false view that working-class Americans were "largely supportive of the war and largely hostile to the numerous movements for social change taking place at the time." Much understanding of the antiwar movement, she writes, is based on two fundamental and erroneous premises, that it "was largely an upper-middle-class social movement, led by privileged radicals,

with college students serving as its troops, and supported by the sentiment of elite doves"; and that the working class "distanced itself from or despised the movement, mostly supported the war and its makers, and was growing increasingly conservative during the era." In fact, "Working-class opposition to the war was significantly more widespread than is remembered and parts of the movement found roots in working-class communities and politics.… By and large, the greatest *support* for the war came from the privileged elite, despite the visible dissention of a minority of its leaders and youth."[26]

As the war deepened, so did an antiwar movement within the working class. It included the rank-and-file union members, who "took out advertisements condemning the war, hosted labor education programs about … the … war, co-sponsored rallies, and started petition drives," by working-class veterans who joined and helped "to lead the movement when they returned stateside; [and] … working-class GIs who refused to fight; and the deserters who walked away." Especially after the 1968 Tet Offensive, the antiwar movement "formed deeper roots among people of color, religious communities" and students who attended non-elite campuses. Social class was critical, as "workers, the less-educated, and those with smaller incomes were more likely than those at the higher end in the early years to support withdrawal."[27]

The domestic antiwar movement was the largest in U.S. history, and the October 1969 Moratorium Against the War alone was the greatest single antiwar protest ever recorded in this country. The movement was deepened and strengthened by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which in January 1966 issued a public statement against the war—a courageous dissent that nearly bankrupted it financially. Calling the United States "deceptive" rather than "hypocritical," SNCC stated that the United States government "has never guaranteed the freedom of oppressed citizens and is not yet truly determined to end the rule of terror and oppression within its own borders." Its move came three days after Sammy Younge Jr., a twenty-one-year-old African American college student, SNCC activist, and U.S. Navy veteran, was murdered when he tried to use a segregated restroom in Tuskegee, Alabama. SNCC called U.S. involvement in Vietnam "racist and imperialist." Younge's murder showed that its role was not to fight in Vietnam but to struggle within the United States for freedoms that

were denied to African Americans. SNCC also affirmed its support for draft resisters. Reflecting the national view at the time, most African Americans strongly disagreed with SNCC's stand on the war and draft resistance.[28]

SNCC's opposition to the American war essentially followed an earlier courageous dissent from U.S. policy in Vietnam by the African American actor and activist Paul Robeson, a longtime opponent of colonialism and imperialism. Robeson praised Ho Chi Minh's struggle against the French and "chided African American leaders for their silence in the face of twenty-three million brown-skinned people" struggling for their independence. He asked whether "Negro sharecroppers from Mississippi should shoot down brown-skinned peasants in Vietnam—to serve the interests of those who oppose Negro liberation at home and colonial freedom abroad."[29]

Early in the American war, Marilyn Young writes, leading activists in the civil rights movement began making the link between "racial justice at home and the war abroad." For example, in late 1964, Malcolm X condemned the war, as did James Foreman, Air Force veteran and executive secretary of SNCC. In May 1967, the FBI noted "with considerable alarm" that there was a growing link between the struggle for racial justice at home and the growing antiwar movement. It reported that Dr. King was joined by leaders of SNCC, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), "and other civil rights extremists in embracing the communist tactic of linking the civil rights movement with the anti-Vietnam-War protest movement." It claimed that King's "exhortation to boycott the draft and refuse to fight could lead eventually to dangerous displays of civil disobedience and near-seditious activities by Negroes and whites alike."[30]

President Nixon's Cambodian invasion in late April 1970, and the Kent State killings shortly thereafter on May 4 (the killings of two black students at Jackson State in Mississippi on May 14 elicited little protest), triggered massive antiwar protests across the country. Perhaps one million students took part in their first political demonstration, and nearly one-hundred campuses shut down for the year, including my own SUNY Cortland that did not have a graduation ceremony for the only time in its history. The writer Kirkpatrick Sale points out that thousands of students also became politically involved in their college communities for the first time. For Cortland and other campuses, however, the antiwar passion that burned so

brightly in May 1970 faded as most students returned to their previous apolitical lives. A small minority would remain active in the antiwar movement after they left college, but they were rare, as most left such civic activism far behind. Sale calls the campus protests of May 1970 "one of the most explosive periods in the nation's history and easily the most cataclysmic period in the history of higher education since the founding of the Republic."[31]

Although minuscule when compared to the astronomical level of U.S. violence in Vietnam, antiwar violence by college youth received the greatest attention from the media and the public. In fact, however, it was an extremely small part of an activist antiwar movement that "numbered more than 9,400 protest incidents recorded during the Vietnam era, as well as thousands of … demonstrations, vigils, letter writing [campaigns], teach-ins, mass media presentations, articles and books [and petitioning] congressional representatives."[32] Added to these activities was an explosion of antiwar news sources across the country, including *The Guardian, I.F. Stone's Weekly, Ramparts*, the *Village Voice, Viet-Report*, and Liberation News Service, that provided reports for the hundreds of alternative newspapers. There were also countless antiwar papers published by active-duty soldiers and veterans who opposed the war, for example, *Vietnam GI*, the VVAW paper.

Melvin Small's *Covering Dissent* examines the press and television coverage of major national protests in mainstream sources, such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, major television networks, *Time* and *Newsweek*, and the liberal *Village Voice* and the left-wing *Guardian*. Commenting on the corporate mass media, Small notes that "time and time again," the corporate media that reported on major antiwar demonstrations "concentrated on the violent and radical … behavior on the fringes of the [antiwar] activity, undercounted crowds, and ignored political arguments the protesters' leadership presented." In contrast, Small found, "much to my astonishment," that the treatment of antiwar demonstrations in the *Village Voice* and the *Guardian* "was often more detailed, accurate, and objective … than that of the … mainstream sources I previously analyzed."[33] Those who read the alternative press, especially the leftist *Guardian*, would not have been "astonished," however, since its coverage of the war and the

antiwar movement was informed and accurate, unlike the corporate-owned media.

Delli Carpini shows that the media followed official Washington's lead in presenting a distorted view of the antiwar movement. It was "often trivialized (making light of student members' clothes, language, goals), marginalized (made to appear deviant, unrepresentative) and presented as deeply divided internally." In addition, it was "presented as ineffective and not a worthwhile political alternative." Since antiwar protests "clearly fell outside the sphere of legitimate controversy, [they] were represented in an almost exclusively negative light."[34]

Appeals to Support the Troops Should Be Critically Examined

President Obama and the official Vietnam Commemoration urge citizens to support and honor those who served in Vietnam—an appeal that certainly does not extend to antiwar activists of the VVAW and the VFP. This charge to support the military in Vietnam, and all wars since, essentially asks citizens to uncritically support any U.S. conflict. As the American war continued, the VVAW and the VFP challenged such a view in the face of condemnation from prominent public officials, the American Legion, and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

For example, although President Ronald Reagan called on Americans to honor the troops, he showed his true colors when it came to programs to aid those scarred by the Vietnam conflict. His "first act in office was to freeze hiring in the [Veterans] Readjustment Counseling Program. He soon moved to eliminate all Vietnam veteran outreach programs, including an employment-training program for disabled veterans." In the early years after the war ended, Vietnam veterans were ignored or opposed by the Legion and VFW, both of which strongly supported the cause in Vietnam but until the early 1980s "lobbied aggressively and successfully to block development of outreach, drug rehabilitation, and psychological counseling programs for Vietnam veterans unless they were funded independently of the VA and would have no impact on programs for older veterans."[35]

The support-and-honor charge elicits powerful emotions for all citizens, including myself, an antiwar activist at the same time that my brother, a Vietnam combat veteran, escorted the body of a family friend home for

burial in July 1969. Perhaps a look back at U.S. history and other wars affords a better opportunity to address this issue—keeping in mind that those who should be ultimately condemned are the class of war makers who make life-and-death decisions for people around the world, including U.S. soldiers who are ordered to risk their lives on the war makers' behalf. During the American war, those soldiers came disproportionately from the working class and poorest segments of society, as noted in one of many demographic statistics on the conflict. For example, between 1962 and 1972 nearly 22,000 students graduated from Harvard and M.I.T.; fourteen of them died in Vietnam. During the same ten-year period, about 2,000 young men came of draft age in South Boston, a working-class neighborhood not far from those universities; twenty-five died in Vietnam. Those from South Boston, therefore, were "20 times more likely to die in Vietnam than [to attend] Harvard or M.I.T."[36]

When it comes to supporting the troops, perhaps a look at the two major wars in Asia involving U.S. troops that came before Vietnam will offer some perspective on this issue: the U.S. wars in the Philippines and Korea. The war against Filipinos in the early twentieth century included scorched earth campaigns in which entire villages were destroyed, and the use of torture including what is now known as waterboarding. A reporter for the *Philadelphia Ledger* wrote: "Our men have been relentless, have killed to exterminate men, women, children, prisoners and captives, active insurgents and suspected people from lads of ten up, the idea prevailing that the Filipino as such was little better than a dog."[37]

Moving forward to 1950 and the war in Korea, a month after it began U.S. Army forces massacred South Korean civilians near the village of No Gun Ri. An official investigation later revealed that 163 were dead or missing and 55 wounded, but many other victims' names were not reported; the U.S. Army put the number of casualties as "unknown." This was not an isolated incident. Shortly after the war commenced, South Korean police working for the U.S.-supported Syngman Rhee regime removed political prisoners from local jails and massacred them. Historian Bruce Cumings, the prominent American scholar of Korea and the U.S. war there, puts the death toll at between four thousand and seven thousand people. "American officers stood idly by while this slaughter went on, photographing it for their records but doing nothing to stop it. A few months later the Joint

Chiefs of Staff classified the photos, not to be released until 1999. Then official American histories blamed the massacre on the Communists." The Korean Truth and Reconciliation Commission has "verified the massacres of tens of thousands of its own citizens" by Rhee's regime—a political figure in the mold of Ngo Dinh Diem, and a staunch ally of the United States before, during, and after the Korean War.[38]

The My Lai massacre offers a concrete case to test the official charge that citizens should support the military in times of war. Here is the response of Kenneth Hodge, one of the U.S. soldiers who participated in the massacre and who stated years later, "There was no crime committed":

> As a professional soldier I had been taught and instructed to carry out the orders that were issued by the superiors.… At no time did it ever cross my mind to disobey or to refuse to carry out an order that was issued by my superiors. I felt that they (Charlie Company) were able to carry out the assigned task, the orders, that meant killing small kids, killing women.… I feel we carried out the orders in a moral fashion, … the orders of destroying the village, … killing people in the village, and I feel we did not violate any moral standards.[39]

There is no bridge that can span the chasm between Hodge and those soldiers who refused orders to kill people at My Lai; and between Hodge and pilot Hugh Thompson Jr., who landed his helicopter in the midst of the massacre and saved Vietnamese who certainly would have been killed. Hodge's defense should also be compared with journalist Jonathan Schell's comment about My Lai: "With the report of the … massacre, we face a new situation. It is no longer possible for us to say that we did not know.… For if we learn to accept this, there is nothing we will not accept."[40]

Retired Lt. Col. William J. Astore (USAF) challenges the present-day "support our troops" mantra that has some of its roots in the Vietnam era. It is "a substitute for thought"; the slogan "generally means acquiescence when it comes to American-style war. The truth is that we've turned the all-volunteer military into something like a foreign legion, deploying it again and again to our distant battle zones." Although the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, for example, have turned out to be disasters, America's leaders "have worked to obscure them by endlessly overpraising our 'warriors' as so many universal heroes. This may salve our collective national conscience, but it's a form of cheap grace that saves no lives."[41]

Real support for the troops should not consist of cheap flyovers at sporting events; corporate campaigns to raise funds for veterans that are pennies on the dollar alongside the vast profits garnered from military contracts; empty flag-waving gestures while supporting political efforts in Washington to cut funds for wounded and disabled veterans and other needed programs; telling veterans that the American war was a Noble Cause when it was not; and politicians lying and promoting endless wars that create more deaths and injuries. The best way to support the troops is to help the activists of the VVAW, the VFP, and the Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) who valiantly work to educate Americans on the true cost of militarism. Citizens should also actively confront war-related issues that still afflict servicemen and women—including the health crisis of Agent Orange and suicides among former soldiers; the staggering levels of violence against female and male comrades, spouses or partners; and the appalling homelessness that affects thousands of veterans across the country.

My Lai Was a Massacre—Not an "Incident"

The most publicized U.S. atrocity of the American war, the slaughter of unarmed residents of the hamlet of My Lai in the village of Son My on March 16, 1968, was a massacre—not an "incident" as it is called by the Vietnam War Commemoration. It lists the death toll "at more than 200 … and it singles out only Lieutenant Calley … as if the deaths of all those Vietnamese civilians, carried out by dozens of men at the behest of higher command, could be the fault of just one junior officer."[42] Colonel Oren Henderson, the highest-ranking officer to face a court-martial for My Lai (and was acquitted), stated: "Every unit of brigade size has its My Lai hidden some place," though "every unit doesn't have a Ridenhour"[43]—the GI whose letter to government officials about the massacre eventually led to public knowledge of what happened.

Respected scholar on international law Richard A. Falk states that the My Lai and My Khe massacres must be understood in light of U.S. war crimes committed in Vietnam. Although these massacres stand out "as a landmark in the history of warfare," it would be wrong to "isolate [them] from the overall conduct of the war." Policies that could be considered as

war crimes include “the Phoenix Program; … aerial and naval bombardment of undefended villages; … destruction of crops and villages; … ‘search and destroy’ missions; … forcible removal of civilian populations; and … reliance on a variety of weapons prohibited by treaty.”[44]

For historian Gabriel Kolko, My Lai “is simply the foot soldier’s direct expression of the … fire and terror that his superiors in Washington devise and command from behind desks.… The real war criminals in history never fire guns [and] never suffer discomfort.… What is illegitimate and immoral, a crime against the Vietnamese and against civilization as we think it should be, is the entire war and its intrinsic character.” Regarding the homefront reception to the My Lai massacre, he reminds us that the “rather triumphant welcome various political and veterans organizations gave Lieutenant Calley reveals that terror and barbarism have their followers and admirers at home as well as in Vietnam.”[45]

Regarding My Lai, the war, and the United States, historian Kendrick Oliver concludes: “This is not a society which really wanted to know about the violence of the war that its armed forces were waging in Vietnam.” Many Americans “perceived they had more in common with … Calley than with any of his victims.… It was the lieutenant … who became the object of public sympathy, not the inhabitants of My Lai whom he had hastened to death, and the orphans and widows he made of many of the rest.”[46]

Among those who responded to the conviction in 1971 of “Rusty” Calley for the murder of Vietnamese in that hamlet, is former president Jimmy Carter, then governor of Georgia. After Calley’s conviction, Carter, considered by many citizens to be a fervent advocate of human rights around the world—undeserved given his record in office—called for “American Fighting Man’s Day” in Georgia and asked people to drive with their headlights on to “honor the flag as Rusty had done.” When his support of Calley was raised during his 1976 campaign for president, he denied having made such a recommendation.[47]

Massacres of Vietnamese were not confined to U.S. military forces. Republic of Korea (ROK) troops allied with the United States engaged in horrific massacres as well. The most notorious instance occurred in the hamlet of Ha My near Danang in February 1968, about a month before the My Lai massacre. “After herding villagers to two killing sites, ROK forces opened fire with machine guns and fragmentation grenades. The killing

went on for two hours and by the time they had finished their work 135 Vietnamese lay dead." Virtually all of those killed were women, the elderly, and children. "In all, ROK forces carried out more than forty massacres in Vietnam during the war"; these as well as South Korea's overall involvement in the American war are little acknowledged within that country. The historical amnesia about what happened in Vietnam, therefore, does not only apply to Americans.[48]

Ecocide Is an Essential Legacy of the War

The horrific and illegal chemical warfare against the Vietnamese was defined powerfully and precisely by prominent biologist Arthur Galston, who asserts that at the end of the Second World War, "as a result of the Nuremberg trials, we justly condemned the willful destruction of an entire people and its culture, calling this crime against humanity *genocide*. It seems to me that the willful and permanent destruction of environment … ought similarly to be considered as a crime against humanity, to be designated by the term *ecocide*."[49]

The devastating environmental health effects of the war continue for Vietnamese and U.S. veterans. Arthur Westing, the leading U.S. authority on ecological damage during the war, addressed these effects at an Agent Orange symposium in 2002. "Damage to the human environment in time of war is thus as old as warfare itself.… Nonetheless, the Second Indochina War of 1961–1975 (the 'Vietnam Conflict'; the 'American War') stands out today as the [model] of war-related environmental abuse." This occurred because of a number of factors, including "long-term systematic fury inflicted by [the United States] upon the environment [of Vietnam] dependent for its survival upon a rural natural-resource economy." Westing also stated that the "massive and sustained expenditure of herbicidal chemical warfare agents against the fields and forests of South Vietnam … resulted in a large-scale devastation of crops, to widespread and immediate damage to the island and coastal forest ecosystems, and in a variety of health problems among exposed humans."[50]

The U.S. Government Doesn't "Hate" War—It Loves It

President Obama's Vietnam Commemoration speech claim—that we "hate war" and "only fight to protect ourselves because it's necessary"—is the latest in a long line of fantastical pronouncements by U.S. officials. Even an elementary knowledge of U.S. wars since the founding of the nation would dispel this delusion. These include the genocidal Indian Wars that lasted more than a century until 1890; wars of aggression against Cuban, Philippine, and Puerto Rican independence struggles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and the overthrow of forty-one governments in Latin America between 1898 and 1994.[51] There is also Korea, Vietnam, Panama, Iraq (twice, in 1991 and 2003, in addition to genocidal economic sanctions during that period), Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria (the latter three still under way as of this writing in 2016)—and many more documented in the Congressional Research Service's important study, released in September 2014, on hundreds of U.S. military interventions. The Veterans for Peace website states: "America has been at war 222 out of 239 years since 1776. Let that sink in for a moment."

Since the end of the shooting war in Vietnam in April 1975, virtually every calendar year has seen the presence of U.S. military forces abroad, in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe. A number of these nations have seen multiple U.S. military interventions under various presidents over the forty years since the end of the American war.[52] The historical record, therefore, reveals a nation that is wedded to war—aided by a public disabled by education and the corporate mass media.

The Conflict Proves Again that "War Is the Health of the State"

The American war in Vietnam and endless U.S. wars since confirm what antiwar intellectual Randolph Bourne asserted nearly one hundred years ago about the First World War:

> War is the health of the State. It automatically sets in motion throughout society those irresistible forces for uniformity, for passionate cooperation with the Government in coercing into obedience the minority groups and individuals which lack the larger herd sense.… Other values such as artistic creation, knowledge, reason, beauty, the enhancement of life, are instantly and almost unanimously sacrificed.[53]

Vietnamese Resistance to U.S. Aggression Was Justified

Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, head of the Vietnamese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference of 1968, signed the Peace Accords in 1973 and later became Minister of Education in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. For Binh, the war of resistance against America is "the fiercest struggle in the history of Vietnam," forced upon a people who did not provoke or threaten the United States. During the Second World War, Vietnam "was on the side of the Allies and embedded the spirit of democracy and freedom of the Declaration of Independence of America in the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence and constitution." Despite this fact, the United States "attempted to replace France and impose its rule over Vietnam." Throughout the American war, the Vietnamese "position [was] clear and consistent. The 1954 Geneva Agreement on Indochina recognized Vietnamese independence, freedom, and territorial integrity." The Vietnamese understood their country was one, and their "sacred aspiration … was independence, freedom, and unification." They have always believed that they "have the right to choose the political regime for their country without foreign intervention."[54] The United States violated this right; therefore, resistance was justified.

Daniel Ellsberg, the Pentagon Papers whistleblower, supports Madame Binh's assertions: "To say that we had 'interfered' in what is 'really a civil war,' as most American academic writers and even liberal critics of the war do to this day … was as much a myth as the earlier official one of 'aggression from the North.' In terms of the UN Charter … it was a war of foreign aggression, American aggression."[55]

Advice from a Vietnam Veteran: Read Some Good History Books

A practical lesson of the war is offered by Vietnam veteran and Holy Cross College sociologist Jerry Lembcke, author of the important book *Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam*. "[The] vast majority of Vietnam War veterans would know more about the war today if they had spent their months of deployment stateside in a classroom with Howard Zinn." And what should be the lesson for young people who wish to understand the American war? "That the veteran … might today be a better

source … had he stayed home from Vietnam and read some history books; [and] the student … whose education might be better served by reading a good history book about the war than interviewing the veteran."[56]

Students and Teachers: Carefully Analyze Your History Textbooks

I have published two studies on the treatment of the American war in U.S. history textbooks. They cover the story of the war in forty-eight works published from the mid-1960s through 1988. A summary of these past studies will be followed by a review of the treatment of the war in eight history textbooks published from 2001 to 2011.[57]

Teaching the Vietnam War, with the late William Griffen (1979), and *Civic Illiteracy and Education* (1997) both present a synthesized history of the war in the language of the textbooks, undisturbed by editorial comments; an accurate and scholarly analysis of that history that examines contradictions, distortions, and inaccuracies; and an analysis of the American War that is independent of the textbook histories, making use of the Pentagon Papers, official government reports, and seldom-encountered (at least in the mainstream) sources that critique U.S. policy in Vietnam and Washington's policies in general. A concluding section discusses the political function of history textbooks within the larger purposes of American education, arguing that they support the official view of the war: it was an honorable cause that evolved into a tragic mistake.

Analyzing the Textbooks' History of the War

After every war the United States has fought, a new chapter is added to history textbooks, one that interprets the conflict for succeeding generations. The new narratives stress the necessity of its involvement and America's role and conduct during the war. Some acknowledge the excesses and even the criminal behavior of the U.S. military, though never defined as such or shown as fundamental to the conduct of the war. They emphasize U.S. patriotism at the expense of rigorous and critical historical analysis. The story of the American war in these history textbooks essentially offers youth a choice between a perception of the United States as the "guardian of the free world" and a "liberal" analysis that openly reveals massive

violence perpetrated by the United States, though not considered to be part of a long history of U.S. aggression against foreign peoples.

The history textbooks' support of the Noble Cause American war denies millions of students the opportunity to critically examine: (1) the causes of the war as studied in the broadest geopolitical context; (2) the charge of U.S. war crimes that have been exhaustively documented; (3) the full extent of catastrophic human and ecological destruction; (4) U.S. war planners' secret and illegal policies, as revealed by the Pentagon Papers and other sources; (5) the powerful influence of the domestic and military antiwar movements, and repressive government responses; (6) the unconstitutional exercise of presidential powers in waging the war; and (7) the short- and long-range consequences of this conflict.

A primary concern put forth to justify Washington's current wars—that a benevolent United States is defending itself against "terrorism"—is also a key concept in the earlier textbook studies. The language of terrorism, selectively applied to enemies but not allies, shaped U.S. public opinion during the American war, as it does today. According to the textbooks, resistance to American forces in Vietnam was built upon "terror," which is the most frequently used word to describe the tactics of the North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front (NLF)—called the "Viet Cong." U.S. bombing, however, the major destructive tactic of the war and more than twice the tonnage it dropped in both the Second World War and the Korean War, is described as "systematic," "heavy," "massive," "raining," "intensified," "retaliatory," "constant," or "stepped up," but never as "terror." The texts do not suggest that U.S. tactics in Vietnam, such as chemical defoliation, search-and-destroy missions, civilian bombing raids, and the Phoenix Program, were war crimes intended to terrorize the "enemy" into submission.

Although the more recently published textbooks (2001–2011) are more accurate and critical of the American War, the issue of U.S. war crimes and criminal responsibility resembles the analysis of the past studies. Terrible actions by the United States are covered, such as the My Lai massacre, but it is simply out of bounds to suggest that such actions and the conflict itself are war crimes such as those condemned at the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials at the end of the Second World War; that those who planned, executed, and lied about the conflict are war criminals. Nowhere is it hinted, for example,

as argued by the late scholar and antiwar activist Carl Oglesby, that America might have been "the enemy of those who are just, smart, honest, courageous, and *correct*.…"[58]

U.S. history textbooks essentially portray American aggression against Vietnam as a defense of democracy and freedom that did not work; it was a mistake and tragedy built on noble aims. The thesis that the conflict was an illegal act of state aggression is not worthy of critical examination. The parameters established by the texts do not allow students to consider the possibility that the Vietnamese resistance was a justifiable liberation struggle against foreign aggression and control of a brutally authoritarian regime—the words "U.S. invasion of Vietnam" do not appear in any of the forty-eight texts examined in the first two studies.

Noam Chomsky's conclusion on the nature of the war and its relationship to the educational system captures the essence of the past and present textbook studies. Simply replace Southeast Asia with Afghanistan or Iraq, and his thoughts in 1966 on schools and society remain just as accurate and relevant:

> At this moment of national disgrace, as American technology is running amuck in Southeast Asia, a discussion of American schools can hardly avoid noting the fact that these schools are the first training ground for the troops that will enforce the muted, unending terror of the status quo of a projected American century; for the technicians who will be developing the means for extension of American power; for the intellectuals who can be counted on, in significant measure, to provide the intellectual justification for this particular form of barbarism and to decry the irresponsibility and lack of sophistication of those who will find all of this intolerable and revolting.[59]

The Most Recent History Textbooks (2001–2011)

In contrast to the earlier textbooks' use of "terror" and "terrorism" to refer to the tactics of the opposing forces during the American War, the most recent group of textbooks mentions the word *terror* only once, describing the December 1972 bombing of North Vietnam as "saturation air terror." These terms have disappeared from the texts—quite puzzling given the September 11, 2001, attacks and the subsequent U.S. "wars on terror."

Following the format of the two previous studies, the recent textbooks were looked at as a single story. Overall beliefs and arguments are critical, not minor differences among individual works that essentially agree on the

fundamental premises of U.S. foreign policy and the American war in particular. Although the recent textbooks are more accurate and contain critical insights not found in the previous studies, as a single narrative they do not offer students the level of critical analysis necessary to engage with the seven major points mentioned above.

Coding the Textbooks

Following the two earlier studies, I decided to focus exclusively on Vietnam. This is not meant to deny the crucial relationship of Cambodia and Laos to the American War, or the death and devastation the United States inflicted on those countries. The decision to focus on Vietnam is shaped by the textbook narrative itself, which says little about Cambodia or Laos. These conflicts each deserve a full and separate treatment that is beyond the scope of this book.

The eight textbooks were coded to see how often items were mentioned, in order to assess the quantity of coverage. Seven or sometimes eight of the textbooks mention Ngo Dinh Diem and his regime, the 1956 elections called for by the 1954 Geneva Agreements, the "Viet Cong," the pejorative designation of the National Liberation Front (NLF), and the NLF itself, the antiwar movement—with an emphasis on its campus base, the Tet Offensive, the My Lai massacre, and overall estimates of war casualties.

Five or six textbooks mention Ho Chi Minh, French colonialism, the French Indochina War, the Geneva Accords of 1954, the Buddhist protests in 1963 that challenged Diem's rule, the "Rolling Thunder" air war over North Vietnam, the Vietnamization program, Lieutenant William Calley, and the killing of college students at Kent State and Jackson State in May 1970. Half the textbooks mention Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dissent on the war and the Tonkin Gulf Incident of August 1964.

One, two, or three textbooks mention the Cold War, American imperialism, the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the CIA, Agent Orange or Chemical Warfare, the Phoenix Program, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) and other military antiwar efforts, the Pentagon Papers, the POW/MIA issue, the Paris Peace Agreement in January 1973, General Thieu, and the Vietnamese "boat people."

No textbook mentions the My Khe massacre, the investigation of U.S. War Crimes by the International War Crimes Tribunal or the VVAW Winter Soldier Investigation, U.S use of torture, and reconciliation efforts undertaken by U.S. veterans in Vietnam to help care for victims of Agent Orange, and to clear unexploded U.S. ordnance still remaining there.

Some Qualitative Thoughts on Recent Textbooks

My Lai and My Khe

Although there is ample coverage of the My Lai massacre, there is not a single word about the massacre committed the very same morning about a mile away, in the hamlet of My Khe. Very few Americans knew of this latter massacre, even after My Lai became public in late 1969. Over the years, however, My Khe has become part of the documentary record and certainly available to scholars. Why is this related massacre not discussed? Since My Lai has been portrayed as a one-off exception to U.S. policy in Vietnam rather than part of a systematic campaign of terror, a discussion of My Khe and My Lai would help students gain some sense of the overall nature of the terror that was an essential aspect of the American war; it might lead students to probe more critically and deeply into the entire conflict. The textbooks vary in their estimate of the death toll for the My Lai massacre, ranging from 200 to 350. These numbers are below the documented total of 407, with another 97 killed at My Khe.

Vietnamese Death Toll for the War

The casualty figures for Vietnamese vary dramatically in the textbooks—from a low of 1.5 million to 3.4 million (the most accurate). According to historian Nick Turse, the most authoritative study by scholars at Harvard Medical School and the University of Washington concludes that 3.8 million Vietnamese were killed.

Agent Orange/Chemical Warfare

There is virtually nothing in these texts on U.S. chemical warfare against Vietnam or the use of Agent Orange in particular—or the horrible legacy of birth defects, physiological deformations, and long-term terminal illnesses, for the Vietnamese or for American veterans. This is shocking, given the long and publicized struggle by American GIs to gain treatment for exposure to the toxic poison and the equally long but not as publicized struggle by Vietnamese to gain some form of reparations in American courts, where they have been totally denied any justice.

POW/MIA Issue and Continued War against Vietnam

There is a rare mention of the critical POW issue, but no discussion of how it was used by Washington, and abetted by the corporate media, to prolong the war during the Nixon administration. Likewise, there is no discussion of how the MIA issue was used to continue a twenty-year embargo against Vietnam, using the totally fabricated claim that American personnel were alive and being held by that government.

Antiwar Movement

The textbooks extensively report on the domestic antiwar movement, the strongest such civic effort in U.S. history. The textbooks' coverage is focused on college students, however, and ignores the involvement of the public at large and union members, as well as key antiwar activism within the military. There is a brief mention of the VVAW, the most active and powerful GI organization against war and militarism in U.S. history, but nothing of substance about their courage, insights, and concrete efforts. Other than one single mention, there is virtually nothing about the illegal and documented CIA and FBI repression of the antiwar movement organized as COINTELPRO (Counter-Intelligence Program), in collaboration with the National Security Agency (NSA). COINTELPRO commenced in 1956 and first targeted the Communist Party, then expanded in the 1960s and 1970s to include SNCC and the Black Panthers, African American activists such as Malcolm X and Dr. King, and other key individuals and groups such as SDS.

Tonkin Gulf Attack

The textbook narrative casts doubt on the alleged second attack on the destroyer *Maddox* in the Gulf of Tonkin in August 1964. However, there is no discussion of Secretary of Defense McNamara and Secretary of State Rusk's perjured testimony before a congressional committee about the incident and the U.S. provocations that caused it. Only one text mentions the U.S. Navy actions that led to the Tonkin crisis, and the nature of these illegal acts of war against North Vietnam that led to Tonkin and the escalation of the conflict are not examined.

Imperialism

The textbooks do not address the thesis that the American war in Vietnam was an imperialist one. There is also no substantive discussion of the war's essence, that is, its cause. Instead, a few textbooks present different perspectives on the imperialist claim, contrasting the views of revisionist historians on the left who support it with those who disagree with them—without taking a definitive stand for one or the other.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Dissent on the War

Little in these texts tell about Dr. King's principled condemnation of the war, and nothing of substance is quoted from his historic "Beyond Vietnam" oration, when he called the U.S. government "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world." Some consider King's Riverside Church oration to be his greatest, and one of the greatest in U.S. history, yet it is virtually unknown in the United States when compared with his eloquent and moving "I Have a Dream" speech. That was a magnificent and historic oration, but it did not explore the root issues of racism, militarism, and exploitation that King raised at The Riverside Church. The lack of discussion regarding his economic and political views deprives students of the opportunity to engage critically with his arguments on the war itself, and its interconnections with racism and poverty in the United States. His prophetic and courageous protest against the American war stirred people

around the world—and still does. But the textbook writers evidently think it is not prophetic enough to be placed in works read by millions of students.

Final Thoughts

Forty years after the American War in Vietnam ended in 1975, the central and most critical issue is now the ideological war over the most accurate and truthful story of the conflict. Whose ideas about the war will prevail? This struggle over ideas about the war will help determine how we, the people, will respond to present and future U.S. international conflicts. Judging from the past few decades, and the relative absence of mass antiwar protests that we saw during the Vietnam era, the lessons are clear. If citizens are to understand the role of U.S. governmental and corporate elites in initiating the current endless wars, they must develop an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the history of the American war in Vietnam. Such an analysis will provide the critical tools with which to counter the hyper-patriotism of the official Vietnam Commemoration.

During the American war, U.S. veterans exhibited courage and honor when they saved comrades from grievous injury and death; when they showed deep concern for both POWs/MIAs and veterans who suffered from Agent Orange–related health problems; and now, when some live in and journey to Vietnam to help heal the scars of war through their efforts at the Friendship House and Project Renew. These admirable and moving actions, however, must not divert attention from the fact that powerful war makers in Washington sent these men to fight and die in an aggressive conflict in which war crimes were committed on a massive scale. It is certain that the Vietnam Commemoration will not honor, or even mention, the courageous soldiers who stood up and refused to obey unjust and immoral orders, and who organized a powerful antiwar movement among their comrades in the field and at home that became the greatest and most effective such effort in U.S. history—led by the Veterans for Peace and Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

The official Vietnam Commemoration lessons are based on the dominant and false story of American beneficence: a nation forever faithful in its quest for justice that always follows a righteous path in its wartime conduct. This book has exposed the lie that the United States government

was doing the right thing in Vietnam. It has presented another story, which must be told of a decades' long reign of terror against the people of Vietnam—a shameful war that no government-sanctioned lesson or eloquent rhetoric from the Vietnam Commemoration can hide. The U.S. government will never acknowledge this; therefore, it must sanitize it for the public at large.

During the American war, those who controlled this nation's foreign policy were, in the words of the late historian Gabriel Kolko, "devious, incorrigible, and beyond the pale of human values." They revealed themselves in Vietnam, and since then in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia, for what they are: international terrorists. But the U.S. invasions and military occupations of Afghanistan, Iraq, and the deadly drone attacks against several countries with which the United States has not declared war have not yet led to an organized and mass antiwar movement here.

Those who want to end these ongoing military aggressions must study the antiwar protests of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the nature of mass movements in general, in order to draw valid conclusions that will assist in building another mass antiwar movement in this nation. Will it simply be another organized effort that will disband as soon as the United States appears to be "winning" a conflict, or ends its most recent aggression? Or will it be a different kind of movement with broader goals and new tactics?

Citizens might conclude that stopping U.S. wars requires building a movement that will be strong enough to prevent wars before they start. Their study of history may also lead them to see these wars as systemic, intimately bound up with the imperatives of capitalism and imperialism. This would require building a mass movement to end the rule of powerful war makers who have historically used the U.S. military machine and this country's foreign proxies to expand and strengthen their domination throughout the world.

An accurate study of the history of wars might lead citizens to conclude that every war results from a set of circumstances or context that will be used by those in control to justify its necessity by using a barrage of propaganda—as in the totally fraudulent claim in 2002 and 2003 that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction that would devastate the United States. The state's propaganda will separate various wars by

portraying them as disconnected fragments, thereby forcing citizens to organize themselves anew each time as simply an “antiwar” movement. A careful study of history might reveal that such single-issue struggles are, by their nature, ephemeral, and do not address the fundamental, underlying causes of U.S. wars of aggression.

The ruling class has manipulated far too many Americans through its domination of the public education system, the corporate-owned mass media, and national security state propaganda. Since the Vietnam conflict ended in 1975, this domination has lessened citizens’ ability to make informed judgments about controversial issues, to understand the actual nature of U.S. international policies. It has decreased their capacity to resist ongoing U.S. violence abroad, which has killed and maimed millions, and created millions more refugees. Gabriel Kolko argues that citizens here cannot resist U.S. wars because most “are still incapable of … a searing reappraisal of their cherished assumptions and vision of society.”[60]

This state of affairs can be changed—but only when citizens reject the official lessons of the American war in Vietnam and form their own critical and moral lessons. They will then see the connections between that war, the U.S. national security state and its foreign policy, the socioeconomic system, and the principles that drive U.S. aggressive conflicts. Citizens must engage with alternative historical narratives that present often omitted facts and interpretations that are based on critical and documented methods of analysis. They must draw lessons that are grounded in the pursuit of justice, humanity, and legitimate government actions. Finally, citizens must grasp the lessons of previous social movements that were organized to stop aggressive wars. Only then will new tactics be developed and a mass movement organized that can confront the war makers and the war machine in Washington.

Notes

Introduction: The Commemoration Story

1. Christian Appy, *American Reckoning*: *The Vietnam War and Our National Identity* (New York: Viking, 2015), xiv.
2. Jack Smith, "Obama and the Vietnam War," *Counterpunch*, June 8–10, 2012. http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/06/08/obama-and-the-vietnam-war/.
3. Noam Chomsky, "The Remaking of History," in *Towards a New Cold War*: *U.S. Foreign Policy from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: New Press, 2003), 144–45. This chapter includes material from William L. Griffen and John Marciano, *Teaching the Vietnam War* (Montclair, NJ: Allenheld & Osmun, 1979); and Marciano, *Civic Illiteracy and Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997).
4. Chomsky, "The Remaking of History," 145.
5. Tom Hayden, "Commemorating the American War in Vietnam," *The Democracy Journal*, April 30, 2013. http://tomhayden.com/home/commemorating-the-american-war-in-vietnam.html.
6. *GALLUP Politics*, "On 10th Anniversary, 53% in U.S. See Iraq War as Mistake," March 18, 2013. http://www.gallup.com/poll/161399/10th-anniversary-iraq-war-mistake.aspx.
7. Andrew Kopkind, "The Warrior State: Imposing the New Order at Home," *The Nation*, April 8, 1991, 433.
8. Paul Shannon, "The ABCs of the Vietnam War," *Indochina Newsletter*, Spring–Summer 2000, 22. See also Charles Hirschman, Samuel Preston, and Vu Manh Loi, "Vietnamese Casualties during the American War: A New Estimate," *Population and Development Review* 21/ 4 (December 1995); and Nick Turse, *Kill Anything that Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam*. The Vietnamese government estimates that 105,000 people have been killed or maimed since the end of the war in 1975 by unexploded ordnance, with 40,000 deaths; see George Black, "The Lethal Legacy of the Vietnam War," *The Nation*, March 16, 2015.
9. Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars 1945–1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 301–2.
10. Some of the works of the authors cited are listed in the Bibliography. These authors have also published excellent essays on subjects discussed in this book at *TomDispatch.com*.
11. Philip Knightly, *The First Casualty*: *The War Correspondent and Hero and Myth-Maker from Crimea to Kosovo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 417.
12. Daniel Hallin, *The "Uncensored War"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), x, xii.
13. H. Bruce Franklin, *M.I.A., or Mythmaking in America* (Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill Books, 1992), xii, 5–6.
14. Quoted in Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *After the Cataclysm*: *Postwar Indochina & The Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology*, vol. 2: *The Political Economy of Human Rights* (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 320; Chomsky, "Visions of Righteousness," in *Vietnam and American Culture*, ed. Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 21.
15. This writer was one of the manuscript readers for Wilcox's *Scorched Earth*. Marjorie Cohn, "Agent Orange: Terrible Legacy of the Vietnam War," *Huffington Post*, May 1, 2015. http://www.huffington-post.com/marjorie-cohn/agent-orange-terrible-legacy_b_7189938.html.
16. H. Bruce Franklin, *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 25, 41–42.

1. The Noble Cause Principle and the Actual History

1. Beginning with Melville, the quote order is as follows: Herman Melville, *White-Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 144; Beveridge, *Congressional Record*, Senate, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., 1900, pt. 1, 704; Wilson, http://www.voicesoffreedom.us/voices/woodrow-wilson/woodrowwilson4.htm; Johnson quoted in Mike Marqusee, "The Iron Click: American Exceptionalism and U.S. Empire," in *Selling U.S. Wars*, ed. Achin Vanaik (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2007), 103; Kissinger quoted in Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States* (New York: Gallery Books, 2012), 355–56; Reagan quoted in Marqusee, "The Iron Click," 105; George H. W. Bush quoted in *New York Times*, January 29, 1992; Bill Clinton quoted in Marqusee, "The Iron Click," 106; Albright quoted in *Washington Post*, October 23, 1999; George W. Bush quoted in *New York Times*, September 12, 2001; Obama, https://www.whitehouse.gov/2011/06/22/president-obama-addresses-nation; Hillary Clinton, www.diplomaticcourier.com/clinton-s-farewell-to-an-indispensable-nation.
2. Matthew Rothschild, *"Obama Steals Bush's Speechwriters," The Progressive, December 2, 2009. http://www.progressive.org/wx120209.html*.
3. Robert Jensen, *Citizens of the Empire: The Struggle to Claim Our Humanity* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2004), 10. This chapter includes material from John Marciano, *Civic Illiteracy and Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997).
4. Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13; and *Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), 20. A West Point graduate and Vietnam veteran, Bacevich's works on U.S. foreign policy are excellent. See also his *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010); and *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013). The American interests and values to which Bacevich refers are the class interests of the dominant elite that are presented as the national interests of all.
5. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 9; and "The Grid of History: Cowboys and Indians," *Monthly Review* 55/3 (July–August 2003), 3–4.
6. Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating & Empire Building* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), xi, 457.
7. Vine Deloria, Jr., Foreword, in Donald F. Grinde and Bruce E. Johansen, *Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy* (Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Center, 1991), ix.
8. Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History*, 76.
9. Washington and Sullivan quoted in Drinnon, *Facing West*, 331.
10. "George Washington: An American Hero?," in Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson, eds., *Rethinking Columbus*: *The Next 500 Years* (Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, 1998), p. 57.
11. S. Brian Willson, "American Exceptionalism: The Rhetoric and the Reality," Brian's Blog, December 19, 2013. http://www.brianwillson.com/americn-exceptionalism-the-rhetoric-and-the-reality/.
12. David Stannard, *American Holocaust*: *The Conquest of the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 121.
13. Ibid., 124.
14. Charles Derber and Yale Magrass, "American Empire and Its Moral Stick," quoted in Charles Derber, *Sociopathic Society*: *A People's Sociology of the United States* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm

Publishers, 2013), 161–62.
15. Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 126–27.
16. Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 28.
17. Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History*, 117–18. Whitman quoted in David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist*: *The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 449.
18. See William Blum, *Killing Hope*: *U.S. Military and CIA Interventions since World War II* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1995); and Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop*: *Latin America, The United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 3.
19. Andrew Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), 17, 20.
20. Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000), 38–40; *The Anti-Empire Report* No. 124, January 9, 2014. http://williamblum.org/aer/read/124.
21. Michael Parenti, *The Terrorism Trap* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002), 7.
22. See especially Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War*: *A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2010).
23. Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 181.
24. Thanks to historian Jeremy Kuzmarov for his personal note on U.S. imperial policies in the Asia Pacific after the Second World War.
25. Smedley D. Butler, *War Is a Racket* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2003), 10.
26. Marqusee, "The Iron Click," 115, 118.

2. French Colonialism and the Origins of the American War in Vietnam

1. Ngo Vinh Long, "Vietnam's Revolutionary Tradition," in *Vietnam and America: A Documented History*, ed. Marvin E. Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn B. Young, and H. Bruce Franklin (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 7. This chapter includes material from William L. Griffen and John Marciano, *Teaching the Vietnam War*; and Marciano, *Civic Illiteracy and Education*. This present volume focuses exclusively on Vietnam and in no way denies the critical relationship of Cambodia and Laos to what happened in Vietnam. The Cambodian and Laotian conflicts deserve a full and separate treatment that was not possible within the context of this study.
2. David Marr, "The United States in Vietnam: A Study in Futility," *Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science* 397 (Sept 1971): 12–13.
3. Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19.
4. Bernard Fall, *Last Reflections on a War* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1967), 71.
5. Lawrence, *The Vietnam War*, 18–21.
6. Ibid., 11–15.
7. Peter Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille*: *A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 2–3.
8. Ibid., 267, 286.
9. Ibid., 297–98.
10. Marr, "The United States in Vietnam," 13–14.
11. Ibid., 14–16.

12. David Marr, *1945*: *The Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), xvii.
13. Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War*: *The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 2012), xii–xiii.
14. Ibid., xiii–xiv.
15. Quoted in Michael Maclear, *The Ten Thousand Day War: Vietnam 1945–1975* (New York: Avon Books), 1981, 16. Emphasis in original.
16. Truoung Nhu Tang, with David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, *A Viet Cong Memoir*: *An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 36, 190.
17. The writer thanks historian Jeremy Kuzmarov for highlighting these contradictions and strengths.
18. Lawrence, *The Vietnam War*, 24.
19. Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars 1945–1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 9.
20. Michael Gillen, "Roots of Opposition: The Critical Response to U.S. Indochina Policy, 1945–1954" (PhD diss., New York University, 1991), 101.
21. Marr, *1945*, 541–42.
22. Ibid., 544.
23. Ibid., 545–46.
24. Gillen, "Roots of Opposition," 99.
25. Michael H. Hunt, *Lyndon Johnson's War*: *America's Cold War Crusade in Vietnam, 1945–1968* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 6–7.
26. Ibid., 29.
27. Harold R. Issacs, *No Peace for Asia* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 161.
28. Ibid., 116–22.
29. Young, *Vietnam Wars 1945–1990*, 24, 29.
30. Kolko, *Roots of American Foreign Policy: Power and Purpose* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 92; H. Bruce Franklin, *Vietnam and Other Fantasies* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 25.
31. Kahin, *Intervention: How America Got Involved in Vietnam* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1987), 22, 26.
32. Michael H. Hunt and Steven I. Levine, *Arc of Empire*: *America's Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 186.
33. Kolko, *Roots of American Foreign Policy*, 96, 99.
34. Ibid., 39, 77.
35. Young, *Vietnam Wars 1945–1990*, 33.
36. Cited in Michael Clodfelter, *Vietnam in Military Statistics: A History of the Indochina Wars, 1772–1991* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1995).
37. Quoted in Kahin, *Intervention*, 90.
38. Felix Greene, *Vietnam, Vietnam* (Palo Alto, CA: Fulton Publishing, 1966), 129.
39. Wilfred Burchett, "The Receiving End," in *The Pentagon Papers*, Gravel Edition, vol. 5: *The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, ed. Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 63.
40. Quoted in Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, *End of a War: Indochina, 1954* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 323.
41. Gareth Porter, *The Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 68, 84, 87.
42. Noam Chomsky, *At War with Asia* (Oakland, CA: AK Books, 2005), 28.
43. Kahin, *Intervention*, 76.

44. Robert Scheer, “Genesis of U.S. Support for the Regime of Ngo Dinh Diem,” in *How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam* (Santa Barbara, CA: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1965), 121.

3. The Diem Regime and President John F. Kennedy

1. Charles Haynie and John Heckman, *The Rebellion against the Diem Regime, 1957–58* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Ad-Hoc Committee to End the War in Vietnam, 1965), 10–11. This chapter includes material from William L. Griffen and John Marciano, *Teaching the Vietnam War*; and Marciano, *Civic Illiteracy and Education*.
2. Edward Miller, “Vision, Power, and Agency: The Ascent of Ngo Dinh Diem,” in *Making Sense of the Vietnam Wars*: *Local, National, and Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Mark Philip Bradley and Marilyn B. Young (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 135.
3. Ibid., 137–38.
4. Ibid., 139, 142.
5. Ibid., 146.
6. Ralph W. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits*: *My 25 Years in the CIA* (New York: Sheridan Square Publications, 1983), 131–32.
7. Ibid., 132.
8. George McTurnan Kahin, “Address to the Inter-Faith Seminar for Clergy on Vietnam,” Boston University, October 1, 1965. George McTurnan Kahin Papers, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.
9. David Hunt, *Vietnam’s Southern Revolution*: *From Peasant Insurrection to Total War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 2.
10. Ibid., 6.
11. Ibid., 7.
12. Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam*: *A Dragon Embattled*, vol. 2: *Vietnam at War* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 976.
13. Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 37, 40, 71.
14. Bernard Fall, *Last Reflections on a War* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 198–201.
15. Truoung Nhu Tang, with David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, *A Viet Cong Memoir*: *An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath* (New York: Vintage Books), 68, 65.
16. Jeremy Kuzmarov, *Modernizing Repression: Police Training and Nation-Building in the American Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 141–42, 146–47.
17. David Hotham, “General Considerations of American Programs,” in *Vietnam: The First Five Years*, ed. Richard Lindholm (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1959), 347.
18. *The Pentagon Papers*: *The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, Gravel Edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), vol. 1, 252. Hereafter cited as *PP, GE*. The *Pentagon Papers were put together by the Department of Defense*, as an official secret history of U.S. political and military involvement in Vietnam from 1945 to 1967. They were leaked to the public in 1971 by Daniel Ellsberg, Marine Corps veteran and Pentagon consultant.
19. Quoted in Michael Maclear, *The Ten Thousand Day War: Vietnam: 1945–1975* (New York: Avon Books, 1981), 55.
20. Robert Scheer and Warren Hinkle, quoted in “Genesis of U.S. Support for the Regime of Ngo Dinh Diem,” in *How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam* (Santa Barbara, CA: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1965), 137.
21. *PP, GE* 2:133.

22. *Dallas Morning News*, January 1, 1963.
23. McNamara quoted in *PP, GE* 2:173.
24. Bruce Miroff, *Pragmatic Illusions*: *The Presidential Politics of John F. Kennedy* (New York: David McKay Company, 1976), 148.
25. Ralph Stavins, "A Special Supplement: Kennedy's Private War," *New York Review of Books*, July 22, 1971, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1971/07/22/a-special-supplement-kennedys-private-war/.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Gareth Porter, *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 13–14.
29. Lawrence Wittner, *Cold War America: From Hiroshima to Watergate* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 213, 215.
30. York quoted in Gerard J. DeGroot, *The Bomb: A Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), 256; H. Bruce Franklin, *War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 181.
31. Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, The United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 48.
32. Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 241, 237.
33. Noam Chomsky, *Year 501*: *The Conquest Continues* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), xi.
34. Richard J. Walton, *Cold War and Counter-Revolution: The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), 6–7, 49–50.
35. Chomsky, *For Reasons of State* (New York: New Press, 2003), 31, 37.
36. Ibid., 44–45.
37. Andrew Bacevich, *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 90.
38. Kahin, *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1987), 127, 130.
39. Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: New Press, 1994), 12–13.
40. Walton, *Cold War and Counter-Revolution*, 164, 201.
41. See John Newman, *JFK and Vietnam: Deception, Intrigue, and the Struggle for Power;* L. Fletcher Prouty, *JFK: the CIA, Vietnam, and the Plot to Assassinate John F. Kennedy;* and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Filmmaker Oliver Stone and historian Peter Kuznick, in their fine, powerful book and documentary that critiques the Noble Cause principle and American imperialism, *The Untold History of the United* States, give too much credence to personal statements by Kennedy to close aides and friends that he planned to withdraw from the war, as opposed to the public record that reveals a leader who intended to stay the course.
42. Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 73.
43. Chomsky, *Rethinking Camelot: JFK, the Vietnam War, and US Political Culture* (Boston: South End Press, 1993), 67, 81. Emphasis in original.
44. Porter, *Perils of Dominance*, 165.
45. George Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam* (New York: Dial Press, 1969), 119–20.

46. Michael Hunt, *Lyndon Johnson's War*: *America's Cold War Crusade in Vietnam, 1945–1968* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 35.
47. Quoted in U.S. Cong., Senate, *Background Information Related to Southeast Asia and Vietnam*, 89th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965), 82; quoted in *PP, GE* 2:98–99.
48. Eqbal Ahmad, "How to Tell When the Rebels Have Won," *The Nation*, August 30, 1965, 96–99; "Revolutionary Warfare," in *Alternative Perspectives on Vietnam*: *Report on an International Conference* (Ithaca, NY: Inter-University Committee for Debate on Foreign Policy, 1967), 12.
49. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, 227.
50. Porter, *Perils of Dominance*, 122, 126.
51. Quoted in *PP, GE* 2:207, 270.
52. Quoted in Maclear, *Ten Thousand Day War*, 78.
53. *PP, GE* 2:201, 203.

4. President Johnson and Escalation of the War

1. *The Pentagon Papers*: *The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, Gravel Edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), vol. 2, 276; Franz Schurmann, Peter Dale Scott, and Reginald Zelnik, *The Politics of Escalation in Vietnam* (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1966), 82. This chapter includes material from William L. Griffen and John Marciano, *Teaching the Vietnam War*; and Marciano, *Civic Illiteracy and Education*.
2. Ralph McGehee, *Deadly Deceits*: *My 25 Years in the CIA* (New York: Sheridan Square Publications, 1983), 139–40.
3. Felix Greene, *Vietnam, Vietnam* (Palo Alto, CA: Fulton Publishing, 1966), 146, 150–51.
4. Gabriel Kolko, *The Roots of American Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Power and Purpose* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 125.
5. Quoted in Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars 1945–1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 120.
6. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits*, 139.
7. J. William Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power* (New York: Random House, 1973), 50–51.
8. George McTurnan Kahin, *Intervention*: *How America Became Involved in Vietnam* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books), 1987, 220.
9. Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 86–87. Historian Gareth Porter takes a different approach on this vital historical issue, challenging the view that Lyndon Johnson "was in command on August 4 [1964] and decided to bomb North Vietnam, despite the knowledge that top military authorities had doubts about the authenticity of the attack." Porter asserts that available evidence now shows that Johnson "was never informed … that both the task force commander of the U.S. warships and the commander in chief Pacific (CINCPAC) had called for a further review of the incident before deciding on any action." Therefore, Johnson "was deliberately prevented" from making an informed decision on this historic crisis in the Tonkin Gulf. *Perils of Dominance*: *Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 193.
10. Young, *The Vietnam Wars 1945–1990*, 122.
11. Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War*: *The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), xv–xvi.
12. Ibid., xvii–xxiii.
13. Ibid., xxii.

14. Ibid., 377.
15. Ibid., 381, 401–2.
16. Mary McCarthy, *Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), 94, 91.
17. Michael Maclear, *The Ten Thousand Day War*: *Vietnam 1945–1965* (New York: Avon Books, 1981), 240, 242.
18. Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*: *Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: New Press, 1985), 200–201.
19. Nick Turse, *Kill Anything that Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013), 76–77.
20. Ibid., 80; Arthur Westing, "Sifting the Ashes of Quang Tri," *New York Times*, September 29, 1973.
21. Christopher E. Goscha, '"Sorry About That …': Bernard Fall, "The Vietnam War and the Impact of a French Intellectual in the US," in *The Vietnam War and Europe 1963–1973*, ed.Goscha and Maurice Vaisse (Brussels: Bruylant, 2003), 363–374.
22. Fall quoted in ibid., 377–80.
23. Paul Feeny and Jim Allaway, "The Ecological Impact of the Air War," in *Vietnam and America: A Documented History*, ed. Marvin Gettleman, Marilyn B. Young, Jane Franklin, and H. Bruce Franklin (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 466, 469.
24. Seymour Hersh, "Chemical Warfare in Vietnam," in *Crimes of War*: *A Legal, Political, and Psychological Inquiry into the Responsibility of Leaders, Citizens, and Soldiers for Criminal Acts in Wars*, ed. Richard Falk, Gabriel Kolko, and Robert Jay Lifton (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 285.
25. Fred Wilcox, *Scorched Earth: Legacies of Chemical Warfare in Vietnam* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011), 10, 12, 13. The State Department and Pentagon advisory statement quoted in Wilcox (p. 10) comes from the Secret Confidential Report *Operation Pink Rose, 1967*. It was declassified and re-graded by order of the secretary of the army in 1988.
26. Turse, *Kill Anything that Moves*, 95.
27. Wilcox, *Scorched Earth*, 2.
28. Ibid., 90, 101, 103. See also Jack B. Weinstein, "Agent Orange Product Liability Litigation: Memorandum, Order, and Judgment," MDL No. 381, O4-CV-400, 178.
29. Ibid., 35, 39.
30. Edwin Martini, *Agent Orange*: *History, Politics, and the Uncertainty of Science* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 2, 4.
31. Ibid., 13–14.
32. Ibid., 239–40.
33. George Black, "The Lethal Legacy of the Vietnam War," *The Nation*, March 16, 2015.
34. Kahin, *Intervention*, 182, 191.
35. Hunt and Levine, *Arc of Empire*, 217; Bundy quoted in Lawrence, *The Vietnam War*, 96.
36. Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake*: *The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage, 1973), 519–20, 524.
37. H. Bruce Franklin, *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 92.
38. Larry Berman, *Lyndon Johnson's War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 101.
39. Cronkite and Johnson quoted in Lawrence, *The Vietnam War*, 125.
40. Bundy quoted in Kai Bird, *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy, Brothers in Arms* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 366.
41. Burchett and *Wall Street Journal* quoted in Franklin, *Vietnam and Other Fantasies*, 94–95.
42. Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, 168–69, 291, 298.

43. Ibid., 313, 318–19.
44. Noam Chomsky, *Rethinking Camelot*: *JFK, the Vietnam War, and U.S. Political Culture* (Boston: South End Press, 1993), 112.
45. Edward S. Herman and D. Gareth Porter, "The Myth of the Hue Massacre," *Ramparts*, May–June 1975, 8.
46. Ibid., 8–9.
47. Herman and Porter, "Hue," 9–10; Turse, *Kill Anything that Moves*, 104.
48. Herman and Porter, "Hue," 12. Italics in original. Robert Shaplen, *Time Out of Hand* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 412. Italics in original..
49. Herman and Porter, "Hue," 13.
50. W. D. Ehrhart, "Hue City Re-Visited," *The Shadow of Vietnam: Essays, 1977–1999* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1991), 164.
51. Patrick Hagopian, *American Immunity: War Crimes and the Limits of International Law* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 66–67.
52. Seymour Hersh, *My Lai*: *A Report on the Massacre and Its Aftermath* (New York: Random House, 1970), 63–64.
53. Seymour Hersh, "Letter From Vietnam: The Scene of the Crime," *The New Yorker*, March 30, 2015, 57.
54. Michael Bilton and Kevin Sim, *Four Hours in My Lai* (New York: Viking Press, 1992), 65.
55. Joseph Goldstein, Burke Marshall, and Jack Schwartz, *The My Lai Massacre and Its Cover-Up: Beyond the Reach of Law*? *The Peers Commission Report with a Supplement and Introductory Essay on the Limits of Law* (New York: Free Press, 1976), 33.
56. Trent Angers, *Forgotten Hero of My Lai: The Hugh Thompson Story* (Lafayette, LA: Acadian House Publishing, 2014) 77.
57. James William Gibson, *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly, 1988), 301. CIA agents quoted in Michael Klare, *War Without End* (New York: Random House, 1972), 264–65.
58. Valentine, "Dirty Wars and the Cinema of Self–Indulgence," *Counterpunch*, June 7–9, 2013. http://www.counterpunch.org/2013/06/07/dirty-wars-and-the-cinema-of-self-indulgence/.
59. Quoted in Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *Counter-Revolutionary Violence*: *Bloodbaths in Fact and Propaganda* (Andover, MA: Warner Modular Publications, 1973), 28.
60. Greene, *Vietnam, Vietnam*, 161.

5. President Nixon, "Vietnamization," and the End of the War

1. Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage, 1973), 539. This chapter includes material from William L. Griffen and John Marciano, *Teaching the Vietnam War*; and Marciano, "Civic Literacy at Its Best: The 'Democratic Distemper' of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)," in *Defending Public Schools*, vol. 1: *Education under the Security State*, ed. David A. Gabbard and E. Wayne Ross (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004).
2. Michael Klare, *War without End* (New York: Random House, 1972), 202, 363–64.
3. Michael Hunt and Steven Levine, *Arc of Empire*: *America's Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 272.
4. Ibid., 229, 236.
5. Bob Fitrakis and Harvey Wasserman, "Nixon's Vietnam Treason," *Counterpunch*, August 13, 2014. http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/08/13/nixons-vietnam-treason/.

6. Franklin, *M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America: How and Why Belief in Live POWs Has Possessed a Nation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 48.
7. Ibid., 15.
8. Michael Allen, '"Help Us Tell the Truth about Vietnam': POW/MIA Politics and the End of the Vietnam War," in *Making Sense of the Vietnam Wars*: *Local, National, and International Perspectives*, ed. Mark Philip Bradley and Marilyn B. Young (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 251–53.
9. Ibid., 260–67.
10. Jonathan Schell, "Reflections: The Nixon Years, Part IV," *The New Yorker*, June 23, 1975, 76.
11. Jeremy Kuzmarov, *Modernizing Repression*: *Police Training and Nation-Building in the American Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 159–60.
12. Nick Turse, *Kill Anything that Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013), 14–15, 21. Italics in original.
13. Ibid., 229–30.
14. Patrick Hagopian, *American Immunity*: *War Crimes and the Limits of International Law* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 88. Italics in original.
15. Seymour Hersh, *My Lai 4: A Report on the Massacre and Its Aftermath* (New York: Random House, 1970), 105–15.
16. Kendrick Oliver, *The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2006), 94.
17. Michael Bilton and Kevin Sim, *Four Hours in My Lai* (New York: Viking, 1992), 3.
18. Quoted in Hersh, *My Lai 4*, 100.
19. Oliver, *The My Lai Massacre*, 39, 48, 157.
20. Ibid., 67–68.
21. Ibid., 24, 80, 102.
22. Bllton and Sim, *Four Hours*, 4; Andrew Martin, *Receptions of War: Vietnam in American Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 157–58; Oliver, *The My Lai Massacre*, 4.
23. Noam Chomsky, *Imperial Ambitions*: *Conversations on the Post 9/11 World* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005), 130, 132.
24. Quoted in Marc Pilisuk and Jennifer Achord Rountree, *The Hidden Structure of Violence*: *Who Benefits from Global Violence and War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2015), 15.
25. Andrew E. Hunt, *The Turning*: *A History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 9.
26. Ibid., 17–18. Italics in original. John Prados, "The Veterans Antiwar Movement in Fact and Memory," in *A Companion to the Vietnam War*, ed. Marilyn B. Young and Robert Buzzanco (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 408.
27. Hunt, *The Turning*, 1–3.
28. Oliver, *The My Lai Massacre*, 109; Turse, *Kill Anything that Moves*, 235.
29. Hunt, *The Turning*, 21.
30. Michael Yates, "Honor the Vietnamese—Not Those Who Killed Them," *Monthly Review* 76/ 1 (May 2015): 10.
31. Oliver, *The My Lai Massacre*, 259.
32. Terry H. Anderson, "The GI Movement and the Response from the Brass," in *Give Peace a Chance*: *Exploring the Vietnam Antiwar Movement*, ed. Melvin Small and William D. Hoover (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 95–96.
33. Jeremy Kuzmarov, *The Myth of the Addicted Army*: *Vietnam and the Modern War on Drugs* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 4–6, 8, 10.

34. Ibid., 7, 14.
35. Colonel Robert D. Heinl Jr., “The Collapse of the Armed Forces,” *Armed Forces Journal* (7 June 1971) 30–37.
36. Marvin Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn B. Young, and H. Bruce Franklin, *Vietnam and America: A Documented History* (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 295, 297. A number of important books examine the domestic antiwar movement: Philip Foner, *American Labor and the Indochina War*; Penny Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam War in Memory and Myth*; Alice Lynd, ed., *We Won’t Go: Personal Accounts of War Objectors*; Staughton Lynd and Michael Ferber, *The Resistance*; Edward P. Morgan, *What Really Happened to the 1960s: How Mass Media Culture Failed American Democracy;* Mary Susannah Robbins, *Against the War: Writings By Activists*; Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS*; and Tom Wells, *The War Within: America’s Battle over Vietnam*.
37. Ibid., 299; Mississippi Freedom Party and SNCC statements in Joanne Grant, ed., *Black Protest: History, Documents, and Analyses, 1619 to the Present* (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1988), 416.
38. Michael Gillen, “Roots of Opposition: The Critical Response to U.S. Indochina Policy, 1945–1954” (PhD. diss., New York University, 1991), 142–42, 379, 391.
39. Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 77.
40. H. Bruce Franklin, *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 55.
41. Indochina Resource Center, *Viet-Nam: What Kind of Peace?: Documents and Analysis of the 1973 Paris Agreement on Viet-Nam* (Washington: Indochina Resource Center, 1973).
42. *New York Times*, January 6, 1974, December 7, 1973.
43. *Washington Post*, May 2, 1973.
44. *Congressional Record*, June 3, 1974, p.17391.
45. *Washington Post*, February 18, 1973.
46. Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin*: *CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Lawrence Hills Books, 2003), 197, 203.
47. Wilfred Burchett, *The Guardian* (New York), May 14, 1975.
48. Ibid.

6. Some Lessons and Myths of the American War in Vietnam

1. Paul M. Sweezy and Leo Huberman, “Why Vietnam,” *Monthly Review*, Vol. 18 No. 6: November 1966, 1-9.
2. Harry Magdoff, *Imperialism Without Colonies* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2003), 118. This chapter includes material from William L. Griffen and John Marciano, *Teaching the Vietnam War*; “Vietnam and the American Textbook,” *Indochina Chronicle*, April 1976; “Rewriting History: A Loser’s Prerogative,” *Radical Historians* newsletter, February 1983; Marciano, *Civic Illiteracy and Education*; and “Civic Literacy at Its Best: The ‘Democratic Distemper’ of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS),” in *Defending Public Schools*, vol. 1: *Education under the Security State*, ed. David A. Gabbard and E. Wayne Ross (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004).
3. Michael Parenti’s argument here is a synthesis of “What Do Empires Do?,” *Znet Daily Commentary*, February 13, 2010, 1–2, and *Profit Pathology and Other Indecencies* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2015), 34. Parenti documents this history in great detail in a number of excellent books, e.g., *Against Empire, The Face of Imperialism, Profit Pathology and Other Indecencies*, and *The Sword and the Dollar*. Noam Chomsky cautioned about reading the general

argument about imperialism too narrowly; it was sufficient as "a general statement on imperialism, but … misleading about Vietnam. It will be read as though the U.S. wanted to exploit Vietnam's resources.… The concern was the usual one (Guatemala, Cuba, Nicaragua, others) that successful independent development in Vietnam might inspire others to follow the same course." Personal communication, August 2015.

4. Noam Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War: U.S. Foreign Policy from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: New Press, 2003), 6, 93, 98. It is a testimony to the strength of the dominant view of American policies that Chomsky, arguably the most influential public intellectual alive and known and respected worldwide, was virtually unknown to nearly all of the 6,000-plus students I taught in thirty-one years at SUNY Cortland. Some had heard of him, but it was rare to find anyone who had read his writings. In addition to his many books describing this process and U.S. policy, listed in the Bibliography, readers should examine William Blum's *Rogue State*: *A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000); and G. William Domhoff's *Who Rules America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967).
5. Fred Branfman, "U.S. War Crimes in Indochina and Our Troubled National Soul," *Human Rights, International Issues*, August 25, 2004. Branfman, the late writer and antiwar activist, exposed U.S. bombing of civilians in Laos after interviewing thousands of refugees there.
6. Gabriel Kolko, "War Crimes and the Nature of the Vietnam War," in *Crimes of War*: *A Legal, Political, and Psychological Inquiry into the Responsibility of Leaders, Citizens, and Soldiers for Criminal Acts in War*, ed. Richard Falk, Gabriel Kolko, and Robert Jay Lifton (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 412–13. In the same volume, see Kolko, "On the Avoidance of Reality," 15.
7. Barbara Myers, "The Unknown Whistleblower," *TomDispatch*, May 31, 2015. http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/176004/.
8. Johnson and McNamara quoted in Daniel Ellsberg, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 12–13.
9. Ibid., 13, 15.
10. Quoted in James William Gibson, *The Perfect War*: *Technowar in Vietnam* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), 434.
11. Christian Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 253.
12. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,"Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence: Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam," April 4, 1967, Riverside Church, New York City, reprinted in *Common Dreams*, April 4, 2008.
13. Edward Morgan, *What Really Happened to the 1960s: How Mass Media Failed American Democracy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010), 76; Daniel S. Lucks, *Selma to Saigon*: *The Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 203.
14. "Dr. King's Error," *New York Times*, April 7, 1967; "A Tragedy," *Washington Post*, April 6, 1967.
15. Lucks, *Selma to Saigon*, 196–97.
16. Quoted in William Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000), 10.
17. Daniel Hallin, *The "Uncensored War"*: *The Media and Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 3; quoted in Clarence R. Wyatt, *Paper Soldiers*: *The American Press and the Vietnam War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 148.
18. Michael X. Delli Carpini, "Vietnam and the Press," in *The Legacy: The Vietnam War in the American Imagination*, ed. D. Michael Shafer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 127.

19. Hallin, "*Uncensored War*," 129; Delli Carpini, "Vietnam and the Press," 138.
20. "*Uncensored War*," 180; "Vietnam and the Press," 149.
21. Michael Gillen, "Roots of Opposition: The Critical Response to U.S. Indochina Policy, 1945–1954" (PhD diss., New York University, 1991), 122.
22. Bob Buzzanco, "The American Military's Rationale against the Vietnam War," *Political Science Quarterly* 101/4 (1986): 561, 563–64, 566–67.
23. Ibid., 571.
24. Appy, *Working Class War*, 222, 225, 244–45.
25. W. D. Ehrhart, *Passing Time: Memoir of a Vietnam Veteran against the War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1989), 161–62.
26. Penny Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 2013), 4-5. Italics in original.
27. Ibid., 7, 45, 52.
28. Ibid., 92; Lucks, *Selma*, 3.
29. Lucks, *Selma*, 10.
30. Marilyn B. Young, "Resisting State Terror: The Anti–Vietnam War Movement," in *War and State Terrorism*: *The United States, Japan, & the Asia–Pacific in the Long Twentieth Century*, ed. Mark Selden and Alvin Y. So (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 245–46.
31. Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973), 637–38
32. Ibid., 514.
33. Melvin Small, *Covering Dissent*: *The Media and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 2, 5.
34. Delli Carpini, "Vietnam and the Press," 150.
35. D. Michael Shafer, "The Vietnam Combat Experience: The Human Legacy," in *The Legacy*: *The Vietnam War in the American Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 97.
36. D. Michael Shafer, "The Vietnam-Era Draft: Who Went, Who Didn't, and Why It Matters," in ibid., 69.
37. Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Rosskamm Shalom, *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and Resistance* (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 18.
38. Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War* (New York: Modern Library, 210), 173.
39. Quoted in Michael Bolton and Kevin Sim, *Four Hours in My Lai* (New York: Viking Press, 1992), 371.
40. Jonathan Schell, "Comment," *The New Yorker*, December 20, 1969, 27.
41. William J. Astore, "War Is the New Normal: Seven Deadly Reasons Why America's Wars Persist," *TomDispatch*, February 1, 2015. http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175950/tomgram%3A_william_astore,_groundhog_day_in_the_war_on_terror/.
42. Nick Turse, "Misremembering America's Wars, 2003–2053," *TomDispatch*, February 18, 2014. http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175808/tomgram%3A_nick_turse%2C_the_pentagon_makes_history_the_first_casualty.
43. Quoted in Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, 222.
44. Richard A. Falk, "The Circle of Responsibility," *The Nation*, January 26, 1970, 80.
45. Kolko, "War Crimes," 414; "Avoidance," 12.
46. Kendrick Oliver, *The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2006), 8–9.
47. Rick Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge*: *The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 687.

48. Alex Doherty, “Kiliing Memory—Korean War Crimes in Vietnam,” *ZNET*, June 2, 2015. https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/killing-memory-korean-war-crimes-in-vietnam/.
49. Quoted in Erwin Knoll and Judith Nies McFadden, *War Crimes and the American Conscience* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 71.
50. Arthur Westing, “Return to Vietnam: the Legacy of Agent Orange,” Lecture at Yale University, April 26, 2002; Westing, *Ecological Consequences of the Second Indochina War* (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 1974), 22.
51. Greg Grandin, “The War to Start All Wars: The 25th Anniversary of the Forgotten Invasion of Panama,” *TomDispatch*, December 23, 2014. http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175937/tomgram%3A_greg_grandin,_how_the_iraq_war_began_in_panama/. See also Grandin’s excellent *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books), 2006.
52. Barbara Salazar Torreon, *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798–2014* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Office, September 15, 2014).
53. Randolph Bourne, *War and the Intellectuals: Collected Essays 1915–1919*, ed. Carl Resek (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1999), 71.
54. Nguyen Thi Binh, “The Vietnam War and Its Lessons,” in *The Vietnam War and Europe 1963–1973*, ed. Christopher Goscha and Maurice Vaisse (Brussels: Bruylant, 2003), 455–56.
55. Daniel Ellsberg, *Secrets*, 255.
56. Jerry Lembcke, “Why Students Should Stop Interviewing Vietnam Veterans,” *History News Network*, May 27, 2013.
57. The two textbook studies are in William L. Griffen and John Marciano, *Teaching the Vietnam War*; and Marciano, C*ivic Illiteracy and Education*, chap. 5. The textbooks examined are listed in these books. The more recent textbooks discussed are Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw–Hill, 2008); George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 6th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004); Robert A. Divine et al., *America, Past and Present* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2005); John Mack Faragher et al., *Out of Many: A History of the American People*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2007); Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty: An American History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011); James Henretta et al., *America’s History*, 7th ed. (Boston: Bedford-St. Martin’s, 2011); David Kennedy et al., *The American Pageant*, 13th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006); Mary Beth Norton et al., *A People and a Nation: A History of the United* States, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001).
58. Carl Oglesby, “Vietnam Crucible: An Essay on the Meaning of the Cold War,” in Oglesby and Richard Schaull, *Containment and Change* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 141.
59. Noam Chomsky, “Thoughts on Intellectuals and the Schools,” *Harvard Educational Review* 36/4 (1966): 485.
60. Kolko, “Avoidance,” 14.

Selected Bibliography

Ahmad, Eqbal. *Terrorism: Theirs and Ours* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001).

———. "Revolutionary Warfare: How to Tell When the Rebels Have Won," *The Nation*, August 30, 1965.

Allen, Michael J. *Until The Last Man Comes Home*: *POWs, MIAs, and the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

Appy, Christian G. *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

———. *Patriots*: *The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* (New York: Viking, 2003).

———. *American Reckoning*: *The Vietnam War and Our National Identity* (New York: Viking, 2015).

Aronson, James. *The Press and the Cold War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970).

Bacevich, Andrew J. *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008).

———. *The New American Militarism*: *How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Bilton, Michael, and Kevin Sim. *Four Hours in My Lai* (New York: Viking, 1992).

Blum, William. *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000).

———. *Freeing the World to Death*: *Essays on the American Empire* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2005).

Bradley, Mark Philip, and Marilyn B. Young, eds. *Making Sense of the Vietnam Wars*: *Local, National, and Transnational Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Burchett, Wilfred. *Grasshoppers to Elephants*: *Why Viet Nam Fell* (New York: Urizen, 1977).

Carpini, Michael X. Delli. "Vietnam and the Press," in *The Vietnam War in the American Imagination*, ed. D. Michael Shafer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990).

Chomsky, Noam. *For Reasons of State* (New York: Random House, 1973).

———. *Towards a New Cold War: U.S. Foreign Policy from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: New Press, 2003).

———. *Rethinking Camelot: JFK, the Vietnam War and U.S. Political Culture* (Boston: South End Press, 1993).

———. "Thoughts on Intellectuals and the Schools," *Harvard Educational Review* 36/4 (1966).

Chomsky, Noam, and Howard Zinn, eds. Gravel Edition, *The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, vol. 5: *Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. "The Grid of History: Cowboys and Indians," *Monthly Review* 55/3 (July–August 2003).

———. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014).

Ehrhart, W. D. *In the Shadow of Vietnam: Essays, 1977–1991* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1991).

———. *Passing Time*: *Memoir of a Vietnam Veteran Against the War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1989).

Ellsberg, Daniel. *Secrets*: *A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

Emerson, Gloria. *Winners and Losers: Battles, Retreats, Gains, Losses, and Ruins from a Long War* (New York: Random House, 1976).
Falk, Richard A., Gabriel Kolko, and Robert J. Lifton, eds. *Crimes of War: A Legal, Political, and Psychological Inquiry into the Responsibility of Leaders, Citizens, and Soldiers for Criminal Acts in Wars* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971).
Fall, Bernard. *Last Reflections on a War* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).
Foster, John Bellamy, and Robert McChesney, "Kipling, 'The White Man's Burden,' and U.S. Imperialism," *Monthly Review* 55/6 (November 2003).
Franklin, H. Bruce. *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).
———. *M.I.A., or Mythmaking in America*: *How and Why Belief in Live POWS Has Possessed a Nation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).
Friel, Howard, and Richard Falk. *The Record of the Paper*: *How the New York Times Misreports US Foreign Policy* (London: Verso, 2004).
Gettleman, Marvin E., Jane Franklin, Marilyn B. Young, and H. Bruce Franklin, eds. *Vietnam and America*, rev. 2nd ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1995).
Giap, Vo Nguyen. *People's War, People's Army* (New York: Praeger, 1967).
Gibson, James William. *The Perfect War*: *Technowar in Vietnam* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986).
Gillen, Michael. "Roots of Opposition: The Critical Response to U.S. Indochina Policy, 1945–1954" (PhD diss., New York University, 1991).
Grandin, Greg. *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).
———. *Kissinger's Shadow*: *The Long Reach of America's Most Controversial Statesman* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2015).
Greene, Felix. *Vietnam, Vietnam* (Palo Alto, CA: Fulton Publishing, 1966).
———. *The Enemy*: *What Every American Should Know about Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971).
Hagopian, Patrick. *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009).
———. *American Immunity*: *War Crimes and the Limits of International Law* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013).
Hallin, Daniel. *The "Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
Heinl, Colonel Robert D., Jr. "The Collapse of the Armed Forces," *Armed Forces Journal*, June 7, 1971.
Hersh, Seymour. *My Lai 4*: *A Report on the Massacre and Its Aftermath* (New York: Random House, 1970).
———. "Letter from Vietnam: The Scene of the Crime," *The New Yorker*, March 30, 2015.
Hunt, Andrew E. *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).
Hunt, David. *Vietnam's Southern Revolution*: *From Peasant Insurrection To Total War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008).
Hunt, Michael H. *Lyndon Johnson's War*: *America's Cold War Crusade in Vietnam, 1945–1968* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).
Hunt, Michael H., and Steven I. Levine. *Arc of Empire*: *America's Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

Johnson, Chalmers. *Nemesis*: *The Last Days of the American Empire* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).
Kahin, George McTurnan. *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Viet*nam (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1987).
King, Dr. Martin Luther, Jr. "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence: Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam," April 4, 1967, Riverside Church, New York City, reprinted in *Common Dreams*, April 4, 2008.
Knightly, Phillip. *The First Casualty*: *The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).
Kolko, Gabriel. *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: New Press, 1985).
———. *The Roots of American Foreign Policy*: *An Analysis of Power and Purpose* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).
Kopkind, Andrew. "The Warrior State: Imposing the New Order at Home," *The Nation*, April 8, 1991.
Kuzmarov, Jeremy. *The Myth of the Addicted Army*: *Vietnam and the Modern War on Drugs* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009).
———. *Modernizing Repression*: *Police Training and Nation-Building in the American Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012).
Lawrence, Mark Atwood. *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
Lembcke, Jerry. *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).
Lewis, Penny. *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks*: *The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).
Logevall, Fredrik. *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 2012).
———. *Choosing War*: *The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
Lucks, Daniel S. *Selma to Saigon*: *The Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014).
Maclear, Michael. *The Ten Thousand Day War*: *Vietnam: 1945–1975* (New York: Avon Books, 1981).
Marqusee, Mike. "The Iron Click: American Exceptionalism and US Empire," in *Selling US Wars*, ed. Achin Vanaik (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2007).
Marr, David. *1945*: *The Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
Martini, Edwin A. *Invisible Enemies*: *The American War on Vietnam, 1975–2000* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).
———. *Agent Orange*: *History, Science, and the Politics of Uncertainty* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012).
McCoy, Alfred W. *A Question of Torture*: *CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).
———. *The Politics of Heroin*: *CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2003).
Melman, Seymour, et al. *In the Name of America*: *The Conduct of the War in Vietnam by the Armed Forces of the United States as Shown by Published Reports, Compared with the Laws Binding on the United States Government and on Its Citizens* (New York: Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam, 1968).

Miller, Edward. *Misalliance*: *Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).
Moise, Edwin E. *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
Morgan, Edward P. *What Really Happened to the 1960s*: *How Mass Media Culture Failed American Democracy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010).
Oglesby, Carl. "Vietnam Crucible: An Essay on the Meanings of the Cold War," in Oglesby and Richard Schaull, *Containment and Change*: *Two Dissenting Views of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).
Oliver, Kendrick. *The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2006).
Parenti, Michael. *The Face of Imperialism* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2011).
———. *Against Empire* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995).
Peers, Lt. General W. R., USA (Ret.). *The My Lai Inquiry* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979).
The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam, Gravel Edition, 5 vols. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).
Porter, Gareth. *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
Race, Jeffrey. *War Comes to Long An* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).
Sale, Kirkpatrick. *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973).
Scheer, Robert. *How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam* (Santa Barbara, CA: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1965).
Stannard, David. *American Holocaust*: *The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
Stavins, Ralph, Richard Barnet, and Marcus G. Raskin. W*ashington Plans an Aggressive War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971).
Sweezy, Paul M., Leo Huberman, and Harry Magdoff. *The Endless War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970).
Tang, Truoung Nhu, with David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai. *A Viet Cong Memoir*: *An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986).
Tirman, John. *The Deaths of Others*: *The Fate of Civilians in America's Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
Turse, Nick. *Kill Anything that Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013).
Valentine, Douglas. *The Phoenix Program* (New York: Morrow, 1990).
Walton, Richard. *Cold War and Counter-Revolution: The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972).
Weisberg, Barry. *Ecocide in Indochina*: *The Ecology of War* (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1970).
Westing, Arthur H. *Ecological Consequences of the Second Indochina War* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, A Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Monograph, 1976).
Wilcox, Fred. *Waiting for an Army to Die*: *The Tragedy of Agent Orange* (New York: Random House, 1983).
———. *Scorched Earth*: *Legacies of Chemical Warfare in Vietnam* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011).
Williams, William Appleman. *Empire as a Way of Life*: *An Essay on the Causes and Character of America's Predicament Along with a Few Thoughts about an Alternative* (Brooklyn: Ig Publishing, 2007).

Yates, Michael. “Honor the Vietnamese—Not Those Who Killed Them,” *Monthly Review* 76/1 (May 2015).
Young, Marilyn B. *The Vietnam Wars 1945–1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).
Young, Marilyn B., and Robert Buzzanco, eds. *A Companion to the Vietnam War* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002).
Zinn, Howard. *Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).
Zinoman, Peter. *The Colonial Bastille*: *A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Index

The index that appeared in the print version of this title was intentionally removed from the eBook. Please use the search function on your eReading device to search for terms of interest. For your reference, the terms that appear in the print index are listed below.

Acheson, Dean
Ad Hoc Committee of Veterans for Peace in Vietnam
Agent Orange
Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam (1973)
Ahmad, Eqbal
Albright, Madeleine
Ali, Muhammad
Allen, Michael J.
American Friends of Vietnam
American Legion
American Merchant Mariners
American War in Vietnam; air war in; antiwar movement of veterans of; Commemoration of; consequences of; ecological consequences of; end of; environmental consequences of; escalation of; as imperialist war; during Kennedy administration; media coverage of; Paris Peace Conference to end; POW/MIA issue after; textbooks on history of; U.S. as aggressor in; Vietnamese casualties of
Andreotta, Glenn
Anti-French Resistance War
antiwar movement; among veterans; at home; King and; within military; myths and lies about; Nixon and;Obama on; textbooks on
Appy, Christian
Asia
Astore, William J.

Bacevich, Andrew
Baez, Joan
Ball, George
Bao Dai
Baum, L. Frank
Bay of Pigs invasion
Beveridge, Albert
Bilton, Michael
Binh, Nguyen Thi
birth defects
Black, George
black antiwar movement

Black Panther Party
Blum, William
Boehm, Mike
Bond, Julian
Bourne, Randolph
Brzezinski, Zbigniew
Bunche, Ralph
Bundy, McGeorge
Bundy, William
Bunker, Ellsworth
Burchett, Wilfred
Bush, George H.W.
Bush, George W.
Butler, Smedley
Buttinger, Joseph
Buzzanco, Robert

Calley, William, Jr.; media on; Nixon's pardon of; public sympathy for; textbooks on
Cambodia
Carter, Jimmy
Castro, Fidel
casualties: of American war; of chemical warfare; first American; Vietnamese; of war with France
Catholics (in Vietnam): Diem and; migrations of; Viet Minh supported by
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); Diem supported by; drug trade of; under Kennedy; Phoenix Program of; at time of Geneva Agreements; torture by; on Viet Minh; VVAW investigated by
Chauvel, Jean
chemical warfare; ecological consequences of; textbooks on
Cherokee (people)
China, People's Republic of; aid to Vietnam from; DRV recognized by; false stories about; NLF and; Revolution in (1949)
Chomsky, Noam; on American education; on Geneva Agreements; on Tet Offensive; on war under Kennedy
Church, Frank
civil rights movement
Clark, Cherie
Clifford, Clark
Clinton, Bill
Clinton, Hillary
Cohn, Marjorie
COINTELPRO (Counter-Intelligence Program)
Colburn, Lawrence
Cold War
communist parties: French; Indochinese; U.S.; Vietnamese
Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)
Con Son prison
Cooper, Chester
Cronkite, Walter
Cuba

Cumings, Bruce

Daniel, Aubrey
Debs, Eugene V.
defoliation program (Operation Ranch hand)
de Gaulle, Charles
DeGroot, Gerard J.
Delli Carpini, Michael X.
Dellinger, David
Democratic Party of South Vietnam
Democratic Republic of Vietnam, *see* Vietnam, Democratic Republic of
desertion in military
Dewey, Peter
Diem, Ngo Dinh: becomes head of South Vietnamese government; Geneva Agreements and; during Kennedy admin-istration; overthrow of; picked by Vietnam lobby; textbooks on
Diem regime: drug trade during; NLF during
Dien Bien Phu, battle of (1954)
Dillon, C. Douglas
dioxin
Dominican Republic
domino theory
Doussin, George
draft
Drinnon, Richard
drug trade
drug use
Dulles, Allen
Dulles, John Foster
Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne
Dylan, Bob

East Timor
ecological consequences of war (ecocide)
Ehrhart, W. D.
Eisenhower, Dwight D.
Eisenhower administration: on Diem; Vietnam lobby and
elections: of 1964 (U.S.); of 1968 (U.S.); promised in Geneva Agreements; in Vietnam (1946)
Ellsberg, Daniel
Engelhardt, Tom
environmental consequences of war
exceptionalism

Falk, Richard A.
Fall, Bernard
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); COINTELPRO program of
First World War, *see* World War I
FitzGerald, Frances
Five Nations (Native Americans)

Ford administration
Foreman, James
Fortas, Abe
Fort Hood Three
France: in French-Indochina War; Geneva Agreements and
France, Vietnam under; Diem and; in nineteenth century; Nixon on; after World War I; after World War II
Franklin, H. Bruce; on American POWs; on antiwar movement; on missile gap; on POW/MIA issue; on Tet Offensive; on U.S. support for France
Franklin, Jane
Fredrick Logevall
French Communist Party
French-Indochina War; Geneva Agreements ending
French Socialist Party
Friendship Village (Vietnam)
Fulbright, J. William

Galston, Arthur
Gavin, James
Geneva Agreements (1954); Diem and
Geneva Convention
genocide
Gettleman, Marvin
Giap, Vo Nguyen (general); on battle of Dien Bien Phu; fighting France
Gillen, Michael
Goldwater, Barry
Gonzalez, Juan
Goscha, Christopher
Grandin, Greg
Green Berets, *see* Special Forces
Greene, Felix
Griffen, William
Guardian (newspaper)

Hagopian, Patrick
Haiphong (Vietnam)
Haiti
Hallin, Daniel
Ha My massacre (1968)
Hanoi (Hanoi): bombing of; CIA sabotage in; occupied by France
Harwood, Paul
Hayden, Tom
health consequences of war
Heinl, Robert D., Jr.
Henderson, Oren
Herman, Edward S.
Hersh, Seymour
Hester, Hugh

Ho Chi Minh: Diem and; DRV proclaimed by; in election of 1946; Moffat on; NLF and; at Paris Peace Conference (1919); in proposed election of 1956; Shoup and Gavin on; in Soviet Union; Viet Minh under; during World War II
Hodge, Kenneth
Hohn-Mizo, Rosi
Honduras
Hotham, David
Howe, Henry
Huberman, Leo
Hue massacre (1968)
Huk (Hukbalahap) rebellion
Humphrey, Hubert
Hunt, Andrew E.
Hunt, David
Hunt, Michael H.
Hussein, Saddam

imperialism
Indian Removal Act (1830)
Indigenous peoples
Indochinese Communist party (ICP)
Indonesia
Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW)
Iroquois Confederacy

Jackson, Andrew
Jackson State College (Mississippi)
Japan: Diem and; during and after World War II
Jensen, Robert
Johnson, Chalmers
Johnson, Harold K.
Johnson, James
Johnson, Lyndon B.: chemical war-fare approved by; on critics of Vietnam policy; in election of 1964; escalation of Vietnam War under; foreign policy advisors to; Nobel Cause argument by; succeeds Kennedy; Tet Offensive under; Tonkin Gulf Incident and; transition to Nixon from
Johnson administration: antiwar movement during; POWs not issue during; Tonkin Gulf Incident and

Kahin, George; on NLF; on Tonkin Gulf Incident
Kennan, George
Kennedy, John F.: chemical warfare approved by; on critics of Vietnam policy; foreign policy of; missile gap and; overthrow of Diem and; as senator; Vietnam War under
Kennedy, Robert F.
Kennedy administration: foreign policy of; Vietnam War under
Kent State University (Ohio)
King, Martin Luther, Jr.: American War opposed by; antiwar speech by; on links between civil rights and antiwar movements; textbooks on
Kissinger, Henry
Knightly, Philip

Kolko, Gabriel; on bombing of Vietnam; on impact of Chinese Revolution; on Indonesian coup; on My Lai massacre; on policy makers; on Tet Offensive; on Tonkin Gulf Incident; on U.S. support for France
Komer, Robert
Kopkind, Andrew
Korean troops in Vietnam
Korean Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Korean War
Kuzmarov, Jeremy
Ky, Nguyen Cao

Lansdale, Edward
Laos
Latin America
Lawrence, Mark: on Ho Chi Minh; on Tet Offensive; on Tonkin Gulf Incident; on war under Kennedy
Lembcke, Jerry
Levine, Steven
Levinson, Stanley
Levy, Howard
Lewis, John
Lewis, Penny
Lodge, Henry Cabot
Logevall, Fredrik

Maclear, Michael
Maddox (ship)
Magdoff, Harry
Malcolm X
Mansfield, Mike
Marcuse, Herbert
Marqusee, Mike
Marr, David G.
Martini, Edwin
McCarthy, Mary
McCoy, Alfred
McGehee, Ralph; on Tonkin Gulf Incident
McNamara, Robert; on Clifford Committee; on Tonkin Gulf Incident; on VVAW ad
media; antiwar movement covered by; on bombing of North Vietnam; on Hue massacre; on King's antiwar speech; on My Lai massacre; on Tet Offensive; after Tonkin Gulf Incident; Vietnam lobby and; war supported by
Melville, Herman
Merchant Marine Services
Mexico
Michigan State University
military antiwar movement
Miller, Edward
Mills, C. Wright

Minh (general)
Miroff, Bruce
missile gap
Missing in Action (MIAs) combatants; as issue
Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
Mizo, George
Moffat, Abbot Low
Montgomery, “Sonny”
Mora, Dennis
Moratorium Against the War (1969)
Morgan, Edward
My Khe massacre; textbooks on
My Lai massacre (1968); army investigation of; hospital at site of; Hue massacre and; media coverage of; military antiwar movement on; myths and distortions about; official response to; public response to; textbooks on

National Liberation Front (NLF; Viet Cong): becomes Provisional Revolutionary Government; during Diem regime; North Vietnamese support for; Shoup and Gavin on; after Tet Offensive; textbooks on
National Security Agency (NSA); on Tonkin Gulf Incident
National Security Council (NSC)
Native Americans
New York Times: antiwar ads in; on Diem; on King’s antiwar speech; on May Lai massacre; on war as Noble Cause; war coverage in
Ngo Dinh Diem, *see* Diem, Ngo Dinh
Ngo Dinh Nhu
Nguyen Bat
Nguyen Dac Xuan
Nguyen Thi Binh
Nicaragua
Nixon, Richard M.; antiwar movement and; Callley pardoned by; chemical warfare approved by; in election of 1968; POW/MIA issue and; resignation of; on U.S. support for France; Vietnam War under
Nixon administration: My Lai massacre and; Phoenix Program under; veterans’ antiwar movement and
Noble Cause principle; media support for; in textbooks
No Gun Ri massacre (Korea)
North Korea
North Vietnam, *see* Vietnam, Democratic Republic of

Obama, Barack: Noble Cause principle used by; on prisoners of war; on Vietnam War; on Vietnam War Commemoration; on wars
Ochs, Phil
Office of Strategic Services (OSS)
Oglesby, Carl
Oliver, Kendrick
Operation Mongoose
Operation Ranch Hand (defoliation program)

Panama Canal
Parenti, Michael
Paris Peace Conference (1919)
Paris Peace Conference (1973)
Paris Peace Talks (1968-1973)
Patti, Archimedes
Paul Sweezy
Peace Agreement (1973)
Peers, William R.
Peers Commission
Pentagon Papers; on Diem assassination; on Diem regime; on North Vietnamese support for NLF
Perot, Ross
Peter, Paul, and Mary (group)
Peterson, Pete
Philippines
Phoenix Program
Porter, Gareth; on Hue massacre
prisoners of war (POWs); Paris Peace Conference on; textbooks on; Vietnamese
Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG)

Quang Tri (South Vietnam)

Rabe, Stephen
Race, Jeffrey
RAND Corporation
Rather, Dan
Reagan, Ronald: on POW/MIA issue; Vietnam veterans under; on Vietnam War as Noble Cause
refugees: Catholic; from North Vietnam
Resor, Stanley
Revolutionary War (U.S. War of Independence)
Rhee, Syngman
Ridenhour, Ronald
Ridgway, Matthew
Robeson, Paul
Roosevelt, Franklin D.
Rothschild, Matthew
Rowan, Carl
Rusk, Dean
Russo, Anthony

Saigon (Vietnam)
Sale, Kirkpatrick
Salinger, Pierre
Samas, David
Scheer, Robert
Schell, Jonathan
Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr.
Second Indochina War of 1961–1975, *see* American War in Vietnam

Second World War, *see* World War II
Seeger, Pete
September 11th terrorist attacks
Shaplen, Robert
Shoup, David
Sidle, Winant
Sim, Kevin
Small, Melvin
Smith, Howard K.
Smith, Jack
Snowden, Edward
Socialist Workers Party (SWP)
South Korea
South Vietnam, *see* Vietnam, Republic of
Soviet Union; aid to Vietnam from; Ho Chi Minh in; missile gap and; U.S. perceptions of support for Vietnam by
Special Forces (Green Berets)
Spellman, (cardinal) Francis
Stalin, Joseph
Stannard, David
Stavins, Ralph L.
Stellman, Jeanne
Strategic Hamlet Program
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)
Suharto
Sullivan, John
Supreme Court (U.S.)

Taylor, Maxwell
television
terrorism
Tet Offensive (1968)
textbooks on history of American War in Vietnam
Thieu, Nguyen Van; flees Vietnam; Nixon's support for; after Paris Peace Conference
Thieu regime; collapse of
Thompson, Hugh, Jr.
Tonkin Gulf Incident; textbooks on
Tonkin Gulf Resolution (1964)
torture
Trail of Tears
Tran Van Don
Truman, Harry S
Truman administration
Truoung Nhu Tang
Turse, Nick; on casualties of American War; on defoliation campaign; on destruction of Vietnam; on Hue massacre; on My Lai massacre; on Vietnamese casualties

United Kingdom, allied with France and Japan
United States: as aggressor in Vietnam War; antiwar movement in; Diem and; France supported by; in French-Indochina War; Geneva Agreements and; genocide against Native Americans in; imperialist policies of; Noble Cause principle used by; at Paris Peace Conference; war crimes committed by; wars in history of
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
U.S. War of Independence
Uoc, Nguyen Dinh

Valentine, Douglas
Veterans for Peace (VFP); in antiwar movement; on Vietnam Commemoration Commission; on wars in American history
Veterans for Peace in Vietnam
Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
Viet Cong, *see* National Liberation Front
Viet Minh (Vietnamese Independence League); at battle of Dien Bien Phu; CIA report on; Diem and; fighting France; fighting Japan; founding of; Geneva Agreements accepted by
Vietnam: consequences of war in; continued war against; divided in Geneva Agreements; under France; in French-Indochina War; postwar visits to by veterans; in war with China; in war with France; after World War II
Vietnam, Democratic Republic of (DRV; North Vietnam): agreement between France and; founding of; Geneva Agreements and; Green Berets in; migration between South Vietnam and; at Paris Peace Conference; POW/MIA issue and; support for NLF by; Tonkin Gulf Incident and
Vietnam, Republic of (South Vietnam): chemical warfare in, ; destruction in; Diem made head of; fall of; Hue massacre in; migration between North Vietnam and; military regimes in; My Lai massacre in; NLF in; at Paris Peace Conference; Phoenix Program in; Tet Offensive in
Vietnam Commemoration Commission; on My Lai massacre; Noble Cause principle used by; Obama's speech before; soldiers not honored by; on technology of Vietnam War; Veterans for Peace on
Vietnamese Independence League (Viet Minh), *see* Viet Minh
Vietnamization program
Vietnam lobby; Diem and
Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW); in antiwar movement; text-books on
Vietnam War, *see* American War in Vietnam
Vietnam War Crimes Working Group
Vinh Linh (North Vietnam)

Walton, Richard J.
war crimes; ecocide as; My Lai massacre as; text-books on; veterans' testimony on; in Vietnam War
War on Terror
Washington, George
Washington Post
Westing, Arthur
Westmoreland, William
white supremacy
Whitman, Walt
Wilcox, Fred
Wilkins, Roy

Will, George
Wilson, S. Brian
Wilson, Woodrow
Winter Soldier Investigation
working class
World War I
World War II; Ho Chi Minh during; Viet Minh during; Vietnam during
Wounded Knee massacre (1890)

Yates, Michael
York, Herbert
Young, Marilyn B.: on antiwar movement; on civil rights movement; on Tonkin Gulf Incident; on U.S. support for France; on war's destruction in Vietnam
Younge, Sammy, Jr.

Zinn, Howard
Zinn Educational Project
Zinoman, Peter